



# Soutenu

WELLNESS CLUB: PRIVATE MEMBERS ONLY

# PRANAYAMA MANUAL

Pranayama is the yogic based science of breath control, utilizing different but generally rhythmical techniques. Pranayama is the source of life, energy, vitality, and strength. It is said that without prana – energy, there is no life.

Hindi speaking Indians have the habit of dropping the final 'a' in Sanskrit words. So pranayama is actually 'prana-ayama'. This translates into 'un-obstructing the breath', not breath control, as it is commonly translated. However, when instructing methods of pranayama, the word 'control', is commonly used when speaking the English language.



# WHAT IS PRANAYAMA?

**Prana means energy, Ayama means length, expansion, stretching, or restraint. Prana and amaya combined commonly translates to 'energetic breathing'.**

**Prana** is life force energy, vitality and power. Prana is the foundation and essence of all life; the energy and vitality that permeates the entire universe. Prana flows in everything that exists. Prana is the connecting link between the material world, consciousness and mind. It is what makes life on the material level possible.

Prana regulates all physical functions, for example; the breath, the supply of oxygen, digestion, elimination and much more.

The function of the human body is much like a transformer, receiving energy and then eliminating it. If a person, or a room has a healthy, harmonious vibration, we say, '*there is good prana (energy) here*'. Illness, on the other hand, disturbs or blocks the flow of prana. As we develop the ability to control prana, we gain harmony and health of both body and mind. In addition to this, with a long and consistent practice, an expansion of consciousness is experienced.



**We gain prana from the world around us in different ways:**

- ◆ **Through the food we eat**
- ◆ **Through the air we breathe**
- ◆ **Through the environment around us**
- ◆ **Through connection with our higher and deeper self**

**Pranayama** is not only breathing exercises. Pranayama is the technique of mastering the nervous system and the subtle conduits of life force, **the nadis**, by gradually slowing down the breathing cycle with the goal to reach an ultimate state of stillness by stilling the breath, and thus the mind.

Through breath mastery, the innate connection between breath and all physiological processes is experienced, as well as a glimpse into the liberated being who exists regardless of breath.

Besides this, pranayama and all steps following in the Raja Yoga system also remove us from interacting with the forms with which we may have karmic entanglement. The retreat of inner practice can give a clearer perspective when returning to daily routine life and inspire the right actions for making spiritual progress.





# PRINCIPLES OF BREATHING AND BANDHA

**Breath mastery and observation builds the bridges connecting body, energy, mind, and soul. The entire system of the breathing apparatus can be trained such that even when we are unconscious of our breath, it will model its training.**

Breathing can operate by instinctual function or conscious control. Many people go through life without paying too much attention to it, until they discover Yoga and how much they can actually control their breathing — and be better for it. Everything is simplified when we feel easy and smooth breathing. Practicing Hatha yoga with awareness centered on breathing takes the practice to another level not possible otherwise. By cultivating deeper movements of breath and savoring the pauses between, a more intuitive and present approach to practice and life can be felt.





### **Inhalation - Puraka**

The action of inhalation is initiated by the diaphragm drawing downwards, creating suction, and pulling the tissue of the lungs into the vacuum between their surface and the inner surface of the rib cage. It can be modified in a variety of ways through the action of bandha — to lock, tighten, close off and block the abdominal muscles, the intercostal muscles, and even the shoulder girdle, back, and chest muscles, as they cover a large portion of the ribcage. All of these muscles, when trained, can give us great control over which portion of the lungs we expand by inhalation, especially when applied in the variety of yoga asana. Inhalation stimulates movement of prana, both in mind and the body, to ‘rise’ upward and outward’s. It has a wakeful energy, curious and aware.

### **Exhalation - Rechaka**

The action of exhalation occurs when the diaphragm begins its movement back upwards, the intercostal muscles contract, and the abdominals and shoulder girdle can assist as well.

Yogic exhalation draws movement inwards and downwards to mula bandha. It creates a connecting feeling through the body and to the earth. It comes with the relaxation response, calming the mind, the switch to the parasympathetic nervous system, and the release of behavioral stress.



### **Abdominal Breathing**

This is breathing primarily with expansion in the abdomen, the same as the way babies breathe. It is very relaxing and helps to softly recharge a tired body and mind. It is used more frequently in Chinese spiritual and martial arts such as ChiGong and focuses on balancing prana in the lower chakras.

### **Thoracic Breathing**

This is breathing with movement in the abdomen, withheld by maintaining the energetic lock of the bandha, to breathe primarily with expansion in the ribcage. This cultivates greater lung capacity, massages lower organs, and increases digestive power. It pulls prana into the upper chakras and develops spiritual energy.

### **Complete Breathing**

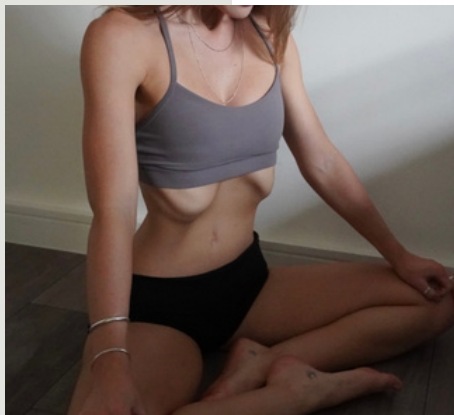
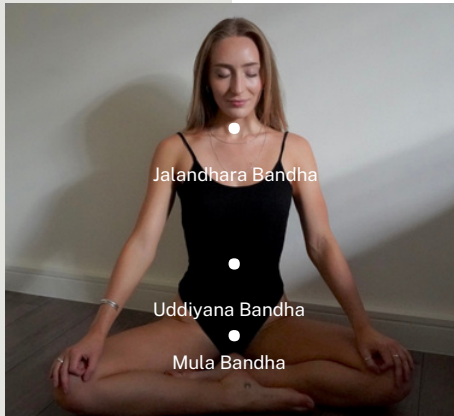
Complete breathing utilizes abdominal and thoracic expansion. It is best experienced laying down on the back as in savasana. After a few moments of breathing this way, it is possible to greatly extend the breath and feel as if you could breathe between one pair of ribs at a time. It is excellent for learning the actions of breathing by the physical sensations and it is highly therapeutic. You may be able to extend one cycle of breath to one whole minute or longer.

### **Ujjayi Breathing (referred to as So Hum Breathing) – Mastering the Breath**

It is performed by slightly contracting the glottis, the muscle you use to swallow, making the passage way for breathing narrower and straw like.

Just as a thin straw works with less suction than a larger one, by using ujjayi, you create deeper flow of the breath with less movement of the diaphragm which lessens the duration of your breath, also giving the intercostals more time to relax, finally resulting in a fuller inhalation. It results in a characteristic broad chest look.

Ujjayi can also be used with the glottis nearly closed and stronger, drawing out phlegm and mucus from surrounding tissues. Ujjayi is also the perfect monitor for performance in asana. Breath should tend towards silky smooth and regular. Tension or unevenness in ujjayi breath is easily noticed and indicates faulty or over exerted asana and vinyasa.



### **Mula Bandha — Root Lock**

The root lock is situated between the anus and the genitals, above the perineum. It is activated by engaging the ring shaped pubo-coccygeal (PC) muscle, located under the vertical axis of the spine and forward of the tail bone.

Using this bandha keeps prana from dispersing out and downwards and directs it upwards. It also stimulates muladhara (root) chakra and gives a foundational point for concentration. The muscle also has the feeling of lift and when engaged, it automatically makes a subtle engagement of Uddiyana bandha. It is possible for women to feel the lift as high as the cervix. Mula Bandha creates an energetic stimulation. Contract it as much as possible while also remaining calm.

### **Uddiyana Bandha — Lift Generating Lock**

The word Uddiyana means flying upwards. There are two ways bandha is performed. By keeping the abdominal muscles withheld and rooted to mula bandhas, during inhalation, our breath expansion moves upwards and outwards creating an open heart feeling.

During the exhale, the abdominals can draw in and down, stabilizing the spine. Focus to a point slightly below and behind the navel and imagine it being tied to mula bandha. Imagining the two points moving towards each other is a great way to develop balance with their practice.

### **Jalandhara Bandha — Throat Lock**

This is the upper most energetic lock which is only used during kumbhaka — breath retentions. It is performed by lowering the chin, lifting the chest and moving the shoulders back. The tongue touches the soft palate and breath is more easily held. When applied with the other three bandhas, prana can be controlled and inner movements stilled.





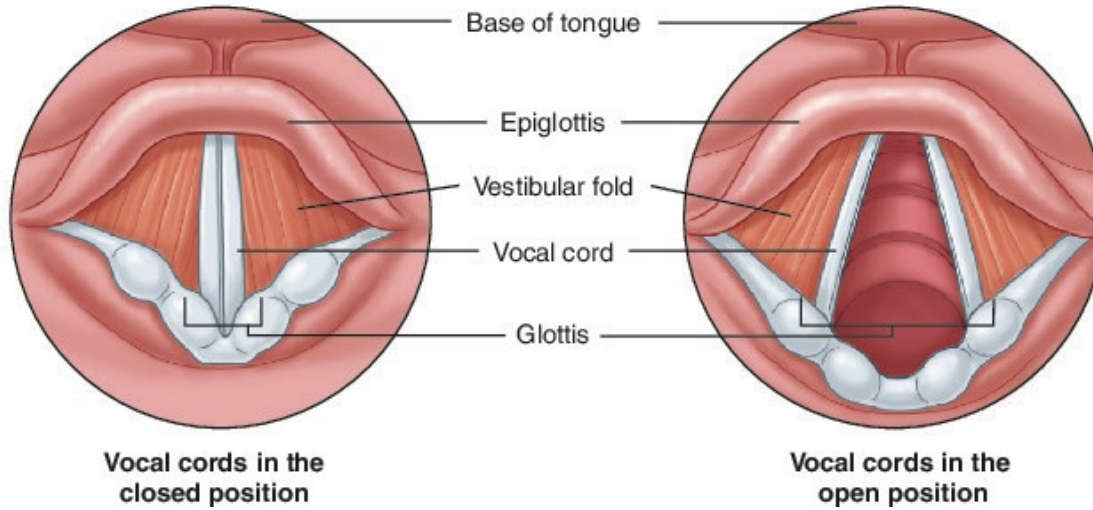
### **Breath Sidedness**

In almost all human beings, the flow of breathing alternates between left and right nostril dominance throughout the course of the day. The interval between sides is thought to be directed by the parasympathetic nervous system and influenced by posture, physical and mental activity, emotional states (a bodily and mental phenomenon), and metabolic cycles.

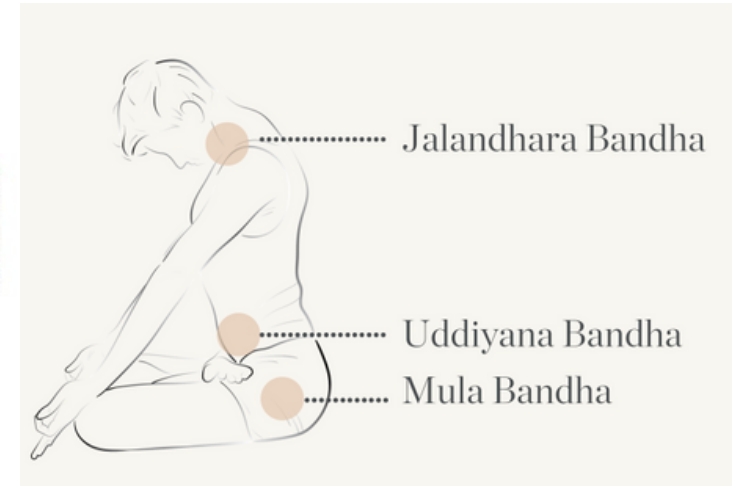
You can trigger the switch intentionally by laying down on one side of your body to open the other side. The bodies intelligence will realize it can't breathe deeply into the side against the floor or mattress and so eventually open your other-side nostril. This can be achieved by the use of the Yoga danda, a intricately carved stick that resembles a Walkingstick and it is used the same as a little clutch. It 'tricks' the body into the same response, opening breath on the opposite side.

Each side corresponds to brain activity in the opposite sides hemisphere and other polar dynamics through the mind-body complex are affected, which gives a breathing on each side distinct qualities. The switch occurs by erectile tissue within each nostril, expanding to diminish flow, and shrinking to increase flow on its respective side. It is possible for breath to be equally open on both sides and this is ideal for yoga practice. More of this will be discussed in Pranayama and the nadis shodhana technique.

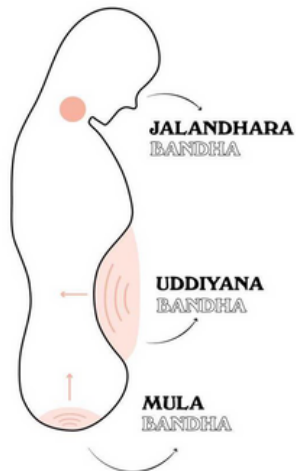
## GLOTTIS: Open + Closed



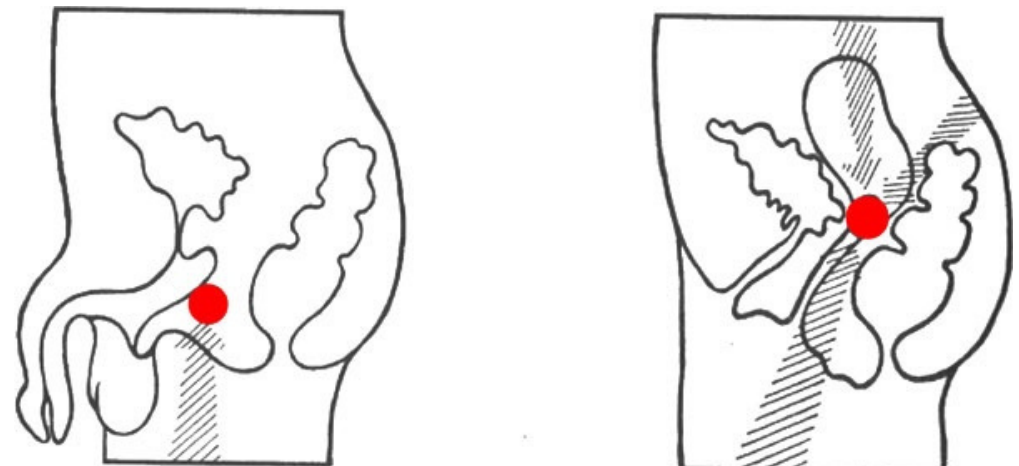
## BANDHAS



## BANDHA MOTION



## MULA BANDHA



# THE VAYUS

Through exploration of the body and breath, ancient yogis discovered that prana (life force energy) could be subdivided into energetic components. They called the components vayus, which means '*winds*'.

The 5 vayus of prana all have very subtle yet distinct energy qualities, including specific functions and directions of energy flow.

THE TWO MOST IMPORTANT VAYUS ARE  
PRANA VAYU AND APANA VAYU

The yogis were able to control and cultivate these vayus by simply bringing their focus and awareness to them. By doing this, they were not only able to create optimal health and well-being, but were able to activate the primordial kundalini energy to obtain states of samadhi.

Complete mastery of the vayus is not necessary to improve our inward focus and the ability to feel the subtleties within the body, however cultivating an awareness of one or more of the vayus will help to deepen our awareness of breath and body to enrich our yoga practice.



### 1. PRANA VAYU

Prana vayu is situated in the head, centered in the third eye, and its energy pervades the chest region. The flow of prana vayu is inwards and upward. It nourishes the brain and the eyes and governs reception of all things; food, air, senses and thoughts. This vayu is the fundamental energy in the body and directs and feeds into the other four vayus.

**To experience prana vayu:** close your eyes, sit or stand with a long spine and relaxed body, and as you inhale, feel an energy flowing up the torso from the belly to the third eye.

### 2. APANA VAYU

Apana vayu is situated in the pelvic floor and its energy pervades the lower abdomen. The flow of apana vayu is downwards and out and its energy nourishes the organs of digestion, reproduction and elimination. Apana vayu governs the elimination of all substances from the body; carbon monoxide, urine, stool, etc.

**To experience apana vayu:** Close your eyes, sit or stand with a long spine and relaxed body, as you exhale, feel an energy flowing down the torso, from the top of the head to the tailbone.

### 3. VYANA VAYU

Vyana vayu is situated in the heart and lungs and flows throughout the entire body. The flow of vyana vayu moves from the centre of the body to the periphery. It governs circulation of all substances throughout the body, and assists the other vayus with their functions.

**To experience vyana vayu:** Close your eyes, sit or stand with a long spine and relaxed body. As you inhale, feel the breath radiating outward from the naval to the arms and legs.

### 4. UDANA VAYU

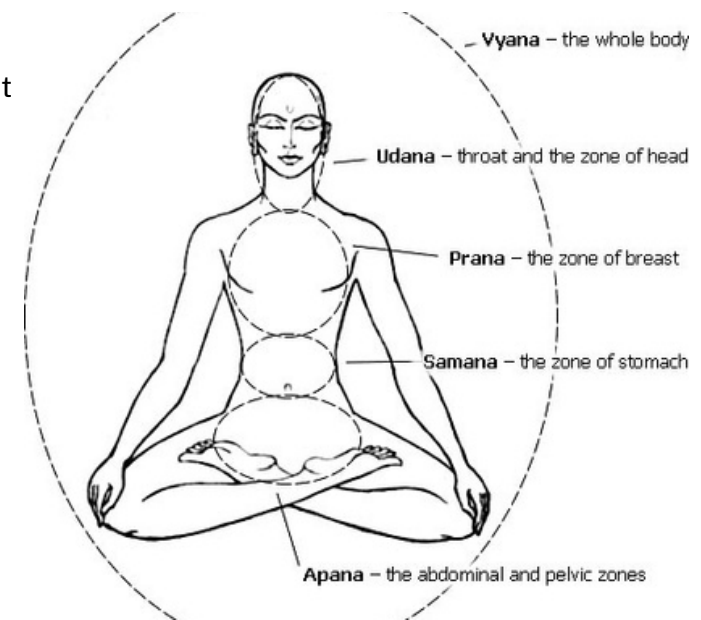
Udana vayu is situated in the throat and it has a circular flow around the neck and head. It functions to hold us up and governs speech, self expression and growth.

**To experience udana vayu:** Close your eyes, sit or stand with a long spine and relaxed body. As you inhale and exhale, feel the breath circulating around and through the head and neck.

### 5. SAMANA VAYU

Samana vayu is situated in the abdomen, with its energy centered in the navel. The flow of samana vayu moves from the periphery of the body to the centre. It governs the digestion and assimilation of all substance; food, air, experience, emotion, and thought.

**To experience samana vayu:** Close your eyes, sit or stand with a long spine and relaxed body. As you inhale and exhale, feel the breath rising and falling in the front, sides, and back of the torso.



Vayu	Action	Element	Chakra	
1. PRANA	Entering and Raising	Air	Anahata	
<p>The first movement of prana is the movement of creation, to enter into existence. Thus, in the body, the inhalation is a function of prana, as energy enters the centre of the chest and expands outwards lifting physically, energetically, mentally and emotionally. Governs ingestion.</p>				
2. APANA	Grounding and Refining	Earth	Muladhara	
<p>In the body the counter movement of prana. Exhalation, expels and moves downwards. Governs excretion.</p>				
3. UDANA	Articulating and Organising	Water	Vissudha	
<p>The energy operating the intelligence of speech, processes of the mind, and intuition.</p>				
4. SAMANA	Digestive and Gravitational	Fire	Manipura	
<p>Within the core of the body, it draws things to the centre and assimilates them.</p>				
5. VYANA	Distributing and Radiating	Water	Svadhista	
<p>Throughout the entire system to expand and disperse.</p>				

# NADIS

Nadis are energy channels that do not have a physical component. For practicality, we can think of the nadis as the electrical patterns of the nervous system, but not the structure - however, this is still not an entirely accurate description as they function at a more subtle level than this. There are quoted to be a staggering 72,000 nadis in the human body. Considering the intricacies of the body-mind system this is not too surprising. An awareness of three nadis is satisfactory for another way of understanding how to achieve energetic balance.

THERE ARE THREE BASIC NADIS — IDA, PINGALA, & SHUSHUMNA



## BREATHING HABITS

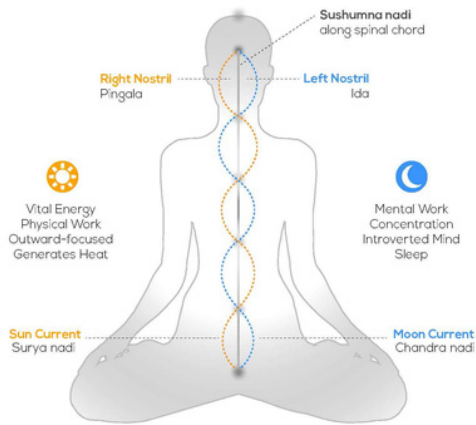
Emotions have a lot to do with breathing. When a person is relaxed and happy, diaphragmatic breathing is a natural result. When people are angry, fearful, or otherwise tight, they mostly use thoracic or clavicular breathing. Some people don't even realize that they freeze between breaths, stopping the breathing process altogether. This can happen when these emotions are conscious or unconscious. It has been suggested by some scientists, that perhaps people use thoracic or clavicular breathing in order to block angry, aggressive, anxious or fearful emotions from their conscious minds. These powerful emotions have strong associations with the lower parts of the body, including associations with the lower chakras, so it only stands to reason that the breath is shallower in order to escape these emotions, or at least tone them down.

Just as emotions can trigger certain breathing patterns, which can be learned and habituated, breathing can also re-create or reinforce an emotional atmosphere. It becomes a potential tool for interpreting, inspiring, or controlling emotional response patterns. The breath plays a crucial role in whether one's disposition is calm or anxious.

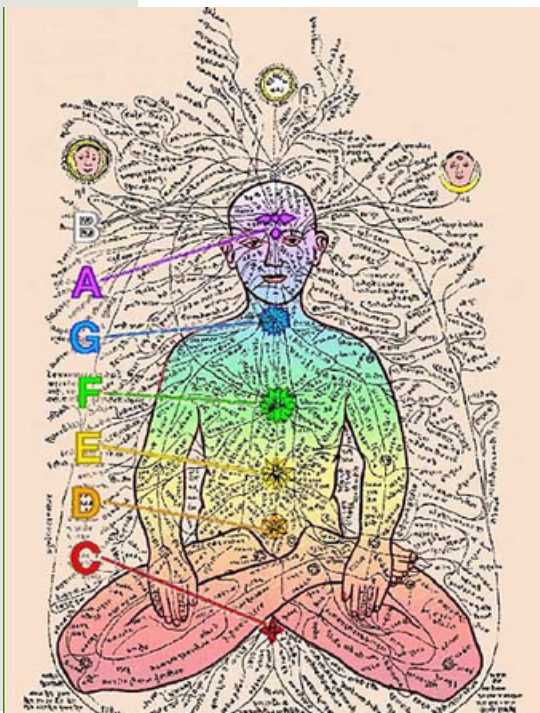
Chest breathing is also a result of self-consciousness about image in society, since abdominal breathing is not seen as a very attractive thing in adults. The female hourglass figure is preserved by using chest breathing rather than diaphragmatic breathing.

Chest breathing is a part of fight or flight reaction and it causes the human organism to think that it is always in a stressful or dangerous situation. Chest breathing gives the mind anxiety, unsteadiness and tension.

### 3 BASIC NADIS



### COMPLEX NADIS SYSTEM



#### Ida and Pingala Nadis

Ida and Pingala correspond to the breath as sidedness we mentioned earlier in the principles of breath. Ida is the left channel, denoted by left side breathing and right hemisphere brain activity. It's qualities are said to be introspective, abstract, cooling, and feminine, symbolized by the moon. Pingala is the right channel, denoted by right side breathing and left hemisphere brain activity. Its qualities are said to be decisive and extroverted, logical, heating, and masculine, symbolized by the sun.

#### Sushumna Nadi

Sushumna Nadi is the balance of these two nadis, or, a unique one which can be accessed only by their balance. Sushumna is the central channel for kundalini to rise through the chakras and generate awakening. Sushumna Nadi seems to have a corresponding physical nerve, the vagus nerve.

The vagus nerve is the bodies largest nerve cluster and connects virtually all the vital organs with the brain and does not pass through the spine. It sends signals to and from the brain to monitor and regulate life functions.

The kundalini experience and the metaphysical chakras are found along the channel of this nerve, in the front of the spine.

# TYPES OF BREATHING

All meditation techniques, or relaxation techniques are ineffective unless chest breathing is replaced by diaphragmatic breathing. The habit of breathing into the diaphragm must be consciously practiced with diligence before it becomes a person's natural and unconscious way of breathing.

The diaphragm is a muscle that causes the lungs to move and is located underneath the lungs, above the stomach. When the diaphragm moves downward, the lungs inhale. When the diaphragm moves upward, the lungs exhale. Diaphragmatic breathing is evident when the lower belly extends on an inhale rather than the chest.



There are basically three types of breathing:

1. Thoracic breathing — mid chest
2. Clavicular breathing — upper chest/throat, collar bone area
3. Diaphragmatic breathing — belly, abdomen





### 1. THORACIC BREATHING

Thoracic breathing (chest breathing), fills only the middle and upper portion of the lungs, not the lower portion where most of the blood is.



### 2. CLAVICULAR BREATHING

Clavicular breathing is centered around the collarbones, and only comes into play when the body needs great amounts of oxygen, for instance, while exercising.



### 3. DIAPHRAGMATIC BREATHING

Diaphragmatic breathing is the most efficient breathing there is. This is because most of the blood is circulating in the lower parts of the lungs, and oxygen infusion is mostly happening there. The diaphragmatic breathing pulls the oxygen lower into the lungs, thus increasing the efficiency of oxygen infusion into the blood stream because the oxygen is exposed to more of the blood. It is only later that adult humans stop using this.

**These three types of breathing can be coordinated into an exercise in which a deep breath is taken. This is a complete yogic breath incorporating all of the lung capacity, not just portions of it. First the lower part of the lungs are filled, diaphragmatic (belly), the middle portion is filled, thoracic (mid-chest), then the uppermost part, clavicular (upper tips of the lungs near collarbone) is filled. An example would be a yawn or a sigh. Everyone has experienced how relaxing it is to let out a big sigh or yawn.**

# PRANAYAMA TECHNIQUES

All pranayama, even vigorous ones, should have a feeling of ease and control. If physical strain in the chest is developed, pressure around the heart, throat, head, and eyes is felt, discontinue the practice. Sit calmly for several minutes, focusing on an easier phase or calming of the breath. It is good to keep in mind to completely exhale before starting the patterns of breath control.

## **NADI SHODHANA/ANULOMA VILOMA**

Alternate Nostril Breathing

One of the goals of alternate nostril breathing is to develop balance between the two energies of ida and pingala nadis to open sushumna nadi and stoke kundalini. The pattern of nadi shodhana is exhale left, inhale left, exhale right, inhale right, then repeat.

### **Description**

Nadi shodhana pranayama is used to clean the nasal cavities as well as the subtle astral channels in preparation for kriya meditation practice. It is highly recommended making this preparatory practice a habit. It calms the body and mind, and helps to become more aware of the currents flowing up and down the spine. It is this awareness that must be perfected in mastering the first kriya.



**Procedure:**

Initially close the right nostril as you are told to do in the case of anuloma-viloma pranayama. Inhale slowly through the left nostril as deeply as possible. Retain the inhaled air according inhale slowly through the left nostril as deeply as possible. Retain the inhaled air according to your capacity. Do mula bandha and jalandhara bandha simultaneously. After keeping yourself in this position, unlock jalandhara bandha and breathe out completely but slowly through the right side nostril. Keep your breath out for some time and then inhale slowly through the right nostril. Retain the inhaled air for some time and then breathe out to the left nostril slowly but thoroughly. Repeat the exercise as many times as you can consistently. This pranayama is for the chakra and the nadi. If it is practiced without using hands on nostrils then it increases concentration and is more beneficial because one fully concentrates on the breath and the mind becomes totally stable and is under control. There should not be any sound while inhaling or exhaling. This should be done at least thrice and up to as many times one feels like doing it.

**Ratios:**

Initially the ratio of puraka (inhalation), antah kumbhak (internal breath retention), and recak (exhalation) should be kept as 1:2:2.

If puraka is done for 10 seconds then antah kumbhak should be done for 20 seconds and recak should be done slowly for another 20 seconds.

Later on, the ratio may be changed to 1:4:2. After having done this, Banta kumbhak (external retention) can also be included in this and the ratio will be 1:4:2:2.

This should not be done at an extremely slow pace. Keep in mind the count of pranas, it should be done gradually, the slower will be the speed of prana the better it will be... inhaling at will, holding and then exhaling at will, is the actual criteria for the success of this pranayama. If done in this manner, the need to rest in between does not arise. While doing purak, kumbhak, and recak, the chanting of OM and Gayatri mantra should be done in the mind.



**Benefits:**

- Regular practice of this pranayama has the capacity of cleansing all of the innumerable nadis, which makes the body healthy, lustrous, and strong.
- All kinds of diseases occurring can be due to the disturbance of vata dosha like rheumatism, gout, IBS, diseases pertaining to urinary and reproductive organs are cured. Besides, regular practice of this pranayama also cures diseases like cold, cataract, sinus, etc. which have reached a chronic stage. The three doshas of vata, pitta, and kapha regulate themselves and assume proper portions.
- Blockages in the arteries of the heart are removed and the arteries become clean, making the circulation unimpeded. If this pranayama is practiced for 3 or 4 months regularly, 30 to 40% of blockages in the arteries are dissolved and removed, preventing the phenomenon of heart attack. Pathogenic cholesterol, triglycerides, HDL and LDL also get controlled, making the arterial channels clear for effective and unimpeded flow of blood in the heart.
- Negative thinking is replaced by a positive approach to life. It increases enthusiasm and spirit, the sadhaka becomes fearless and feels blissful.

In short, this pranayama has the effect of cleansing the body, and the mind and cures almost all of the diseases from which the sadhaka has been suffering.

**UJJAYI PRANAYAMA**

Victorious Breath, Ocean Breath, Cobra Breathing

Ujjayi: “One who is victorious”

Requirements: Find your meditation seat

**Description**

Ujjayi pranayama is sometimes referred to as Ocean Breath, or more contemporarily, Darth Vader Breath. With this exercise, you must breathe in and out deeply through both nostrils while providing a certain sound in the throat. The inhalation sound is louder than the exhalation. This exercise is normally practiced between six and twelve times. The inhaling breath should be of the same duration as the exhaling breath.



The purpose of this exercise is to strengthen the diaphragm, calm the breath, and encourage the healthy flow of prana.

The most common errors made in ujjayi pranayama are:

- 1) vocalizing the sound
- 2) not breathing using the diaphragm
- 3) not placing the right amount of pressure on your breathing process.

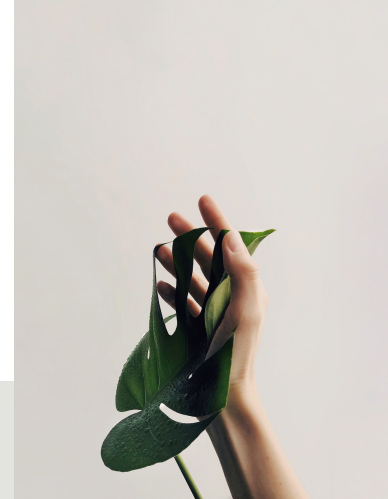
Diaphragmatic breathing means to use the muscle located above your abdomen and under the lungs. When breathing correctly, the chest cavity will expand and contract with each inhale and exhale. Again, the vocal cords are not used in any way in this exercise.

### **Procedure**

Sit in an asana in which you meditate. Contract the muscles of your throat as much as you can while doing puraka (inhale) and when air is inhaled with the contracted throat muscles, a sound similar to snoring will be experienced. While sitting in Dhysana asana inhale air through both nostrils. On doing so, the air should touch the muscles of the contracted throat, but there should not be any friction in the nostrils. In the beginning, do not do kumbhak and do puruka-recak only. After practice of some days, kumbhak should be done for twice the time taken in purak and recak. If you do kumbhak at both stages for 10 seconds, perform jalandhara bandha and mula bandha simultaneously. In this pranayama, keep the right side nostril closed and exhale only through the left nostril.

### **Benefits**

- it is beneficial for those who suffer from cough, cold and bronchitis throughout the year. It is good for those who suffer from tonsillitis, thyroid, insomnia, mental tension, high blood pressure, constipation, vata diseases, tuberculosis, etc.
- it's regular practice helps in getting rid of throat diseases and gives a sweet voice to the individual practicing it.
- Ujjayi is also good for kundalini jagaran, ajapa-japa dhyana — chanting of mantra in the mind, soundlessly, etc. It cures lisp in children.



## **BHASTRIKA PRANAYAMA**

Bellows Breath

### **DESCRIPTION**

In the context of kriya yoga, Bhastrika pranayama can be used to perform a tapping upon anahata (heart chakra), similarly to how navi kriya performs a tapping upon manipura (solar plexus chakra). It helps to clear any blockages inside the chakra or in the sushumna, a few inches above and below.

Outside of kriya yoga, bhastrika pranayama is generally considered a Hatha yoga technique with the following benefits:

1. Massages the area around the diaphragm, thus dispelling toxins/poisons from the lungs and other organs.
2. Boosts oxygen supply to cells.
3. Immunity support — wards off diseases, even when practiced just 5 minutes per day.

Bhastrika pranayama should not be performed by those who are pregnant or experiencing circulatory problems.

### **PROCEDURE**

Sit in a comfortable asana. Breathe in through both nostrils forcefully, until the lungs are full and diaphragm is stretched. Then breathe out with equal force, but see that the abdominal cavity does not blow up due to the air breathed in. Depending upon the capacity and health of an individual, this pranayama can be done in three variable speeds; slow, moderate, and fast.

Individuals with weak lungs and heart should do this at a slow speed while performing recak and puruka. A healthy individual, and one used to the exercise, should do it initially at a slow speed and gradually increase the speed to moderate, then fast. This pranayama should be done for 5 to 10 minutes.

### **SPECIAL NOTES**

Those suffering from high blood pressure or from any heart disease should not do this pranayama.

While breathing in, the abdominal area should not blow up. You have to fill the air in the chest area, i.e. up to the diaphragm, so that the ribs swell. In the summer season, reduce the number of repetitions of this pranayama.



In case both the nostrils do not open on account of ailments like severe cough or sinus etc., such persons should first close the right nostril and breathe (exhalation and inhalation) through the left nostril only. Then the left nostril should be closed and respiration should be done by the right nostril.

This method of alternate breathing should be continued at the desired speed; slow, moderate, or fast, until both the nostrils open simultaneously. At the end, pranayama should be completed by doing recak and puraka through both Ida and Pingala.

Do this pranayama for the duration of three to five minutes everyday. While doing this pranayama, keep both the eyes closed and mentally chant the mantra “OM”.

### **Benefits**

- Diseases like cold, cough, allergy, asthma, and respiratory diseases of all kinds are cured. Lungs become strong and due to the heart and head getting adequate quality of pure and fresh air, health is improved.
- Diseases of the throat like thyroid, tonsils and other ailments of throat are cured.
- This pranayama brings about a proper balance of the three doshas i.e. vata, pitta, and kapha, and maintain their balance. Blood is purified and the body gets rid of foreign toxins and poisons.
- Stabilises prana and calms the mind, and helps the upward journey of prana from muladhara chakra (root chakra) to sahsrara chakra (crown chakra — cerebral gland) and is helpful in the kundalini jagaran.

### **KAPALABHATI PRANAYAMA**

Skull Shining Breath

### **Description**

'Kapala' means forehead and 'Bhati' means light. Hence, kapala-bhati refers to the exercise that makes the forehead luminous and lustrous. Kapala-bhati pranayama makes its sadhaka's head luminous. This pranayama is a little different from bhastrika pranayama, but similar. In Bhastrika pranayama, puruka and recak are done with the same amount of force, where as in Kapala-Bhakti, more attention is to be given to the act of forceful recak (exhale).

### **Procedure**

In short, breathe in normally and breathe out forcefully, so as to influence the organs of the abdominal area. In doing so, the abdominal area also makes inward and upward movements and considerable force is applied



to the manipura, svadhista and muladhara chakras. This pranayama should be done for five minutes. Persons suffering from acute and chronic disease may practice it for 15 minutes or more as per their capabilities.

### **Duration**

Do this pranayama at the start for a period of three minutes and gradually increase it to five minutes. Initially, if you feel tired in between, rest for awhile then resume. After practicing for about two months, you will be able to perform this pranayama for five minutes at a stretch without any fatigue. This is the total duration for which it should be done. In the beginning, you may feel a little pain in the back or abdomen. But this will disappear after some practice. So do not give up. People whose glands secrete lots of bile inside the body are termed as pitta prakriti. They should not do this pranayama for more than two minutes during the summer season.

### **Benefits**

- Face becomes lustrous and attractive.
- Diseases related to kapha like asthma, respiratory troubles, allergies, sinus, etc. are cured.
- Diseases of the heart, lungs and brain get cured.
- Obesity, diabetes, flatulence, constipation, acidity and diseases pertaining to kidneys and prostate glands etc. are cured.
- If done regularly for five minutes daily, it relieves constipation. blood sugar becomes normal and weight in the abdominal region reduces considerably. Blockages in the arteries are also cleared.
- Peace and stability of mind are achieved. No negative thoughts occur. Troubles like depression are cured.
- Chakras are purified and chakra from muladhara to sahsrara chakra are filled with pious cosmic energy.
- Organs in the abdominal cavity — stomach, pancreas, liver, spleen, intestine, prostate, and kidney function more efficiently and develop immunity towards diseases. This is the best exercise; benefits accrued by this cannot be obtained by several other asanas. It strengthens the intestines and improves digestion.

## **BHRAMARI PRANAYAMA**

Bee Breathing Technique

### **Description**

Bhramari Pranayama or the Humming Bee breath produced during slow exhalation. The eyes and ears are closed using the fingers during this process. This cuts off external sensory inputs of sound and sight and helps to internalize the consciousness.





Practice of Bhramari pranayama can be a prelude to nada yoga — the science of (and meditation on) internal sounds/vibrations.

### **Procedure**

Breathe in until your lungs are full of air. Close your ears with both thumbs, and eyes with the middle fingers on respective sides — using little pressure. Lightly press forehead with both index fingers and close the eyes. Then press eyes and bridge of the nose from the sides with remaining fingers. Concentrate your mind on ajna chakra (third eye — between eyebrows). Close your mouth and begin slowly exhaling, making the humming sound of a bee, while reciting “OM” mantra mentally. Repeat the exercise 11-21 times according to your capacity.

### **Benefits**

With the practice of this pranayama, the mind becomes steady. It is beneficial for conditions like mental tension, agitation, high blood pressure, heart diseases, etc. It is also useful for meditation.

## **SITALI PRANAYAMA**

Cooling Breath

### **Description**

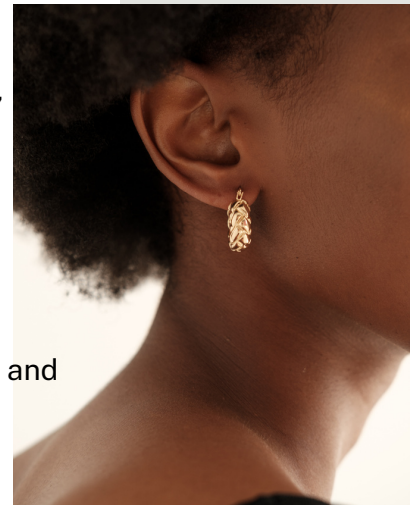
Sitali pranayama is often translated as ‘the cooling breath’ because the act of drawing the air across the tongue and into the mouth is said to have a cooling and calming effect on the nervous system.

### **Procedure**

Sit in a comfortable asana. Place your palms on the knees. Bend the tongue from their extreme ends so as to form a cylindrical shape. Inhale through the tongue filling the lungs with air to their maximum capacity. Retain the air in kumbhak (hold the breath) as long as you can with jalandhara bandha (throat lock). Then close the mouth and exhale through the nostrils. Repeat again from the first stage to the last as many times as possible (8-10 times preferably). In winter season, it should not be practiced for long durations.

### **Special Note**

Jalandhara Bandha can also be used along with the kumbha. Sitali and sikari pranayama should not be done by those who suffer from kapha and also the individuals who suffer from cold, cough, or tonsillitis.



**Benefits**

- It is beneficial for fighting diseases of the throat. It also cures diseases like indigestion, fever, and disorders of the spleen.
- It helps to establish control on thirst and hunger— according to the ancient books on 'yog'.
- It lowers high blood pressure and is beneficial for fighting diseases caused by imbalance of pitta doshas. It also purifies the blood.



# PRANAYAMA

## RATIOS + TIMING

The long and rhythmic phases of pranayama breathing trains the bodies metabolic activities to become more efficient by going deeper into the 'mode' of each stage of breathing. This naturally quiets any extraneous activities such as an overactive mind.

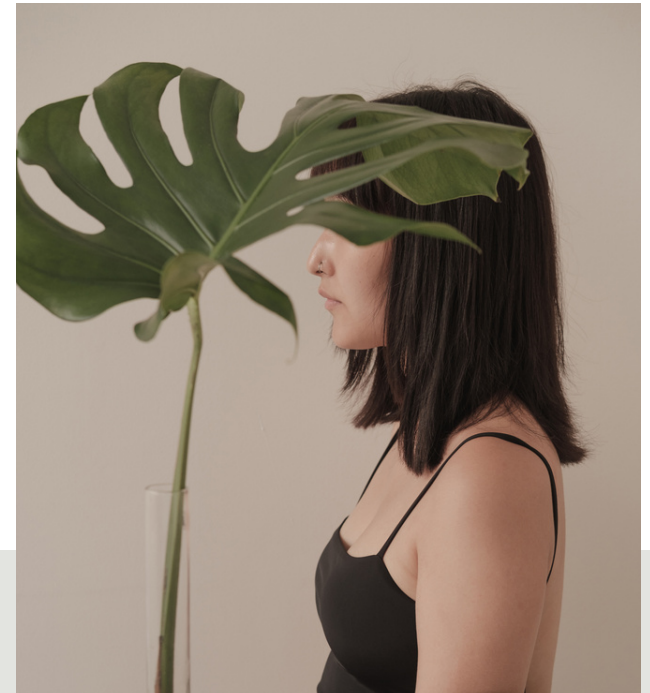
The most commonly recommended ratio of inhalation to exhalation is 1:2. Assuming a yogic lifestyle is applied, consistent practice is the most important factor in advancing pranayama.

The body and mind adapts to the training, thus, breath duration and ratios progressively extend. As technique improves, feelings of ease, peace, and inner awareness increases.

### **Rhythmic Breathing and the Metronome**

Often, in a beginners yoga class, a 1:1 breathing ratio will be used, as perhaps many of the students have never done rhythmic breathing before. The duration of the breath for a new student of pranayama should be about 4-6 seconds (or count). Even if it is possible to breathe longer, for example, 10:10, it will be better to inhale not too long because the next ratio is 1:2. That would turn 10:10 to... 10:20. Pretty daunting. 4:8 however, is achievable for most people.

Knowing when to increase the inhalation count is indicated by the exhalation. If the exhalation is able to be extended longer than twice as long, then you can increase the inhale accordingly. For practical time keeping, always extend the exhale to the next even count. 6, 8, 10 etc.



We recommend you use a metronome when practicing pranayama. It will help you greatly in keeping focus and keeping aware of the rhythm. However, do not force yourself to match any expectations you may place on yourself. This tool is an aid and a reference for learning from practice.

Follow the feelings in the body as they will indicate whether you are exceeding your capacity. There may also be times when your exhale becomes shorter. Again, change your inhale accordingly. As you practice sustaining the same rhythm, it will become easier.

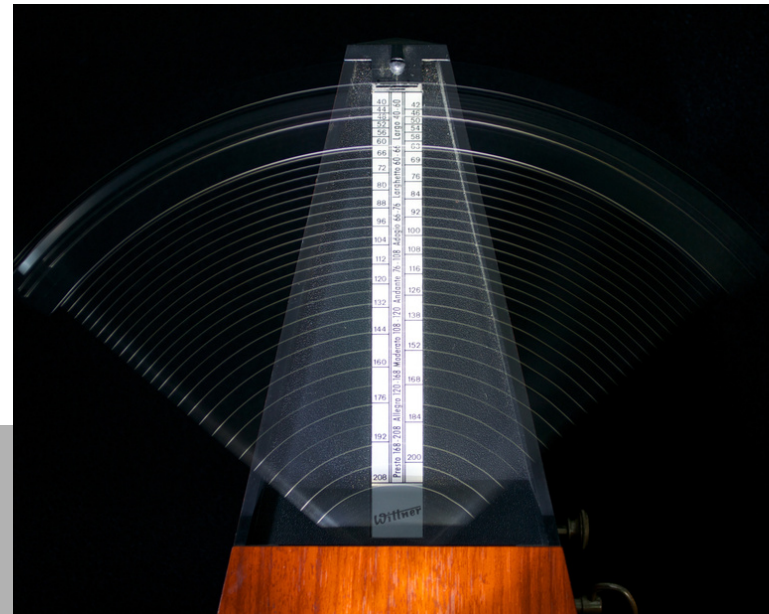
***In our private pranayama practice, we set the metronome to 60 bpm, or beats per minute.***

### **Adding Retention — Kumbhaka**

Breath retention is the next stage of pranayama. As the nerves become pacified by extension of exhalation, retention can be held in utmost peace and stillness for contemplation on the self.

Typically, retention of inhalation is practiced for some time before retention of exhalation. Initially, breath is only held for 1 count and then slowly increased to equal the count of inhalation. The commonly recommended pranayama ratio of inhalation to retention to exhalation is 1:1:2.

Eventually, the same procedure is used to retention of exhalation to achieve the ratio of 1:1:2:1. Usually the teacher will advise when one is fit to move to the next phase. Example of ratio for 4 second breath — 4 inhale : 4 hold : 8 exhale: 4 hold.



Using a metronome can aid as a reference to improve your timing when practice pranayama

**Advanced Pranayama**

Progression to more advanced rhythms should be steady and slow. It is paramount to always remain relaxed and practice pranayama in an unforced manner. There are an infinite number of different ratios which can be applied and generally they will move towards longer retentions relative to breath duration.

A very adept pranayama practitioner might practice 1:4:4:4 and use a very long breath, perhaps 8:36:36:36. This is possible, but could perhaps take decades of dedicated practice and diligent mind control.

