

Breathing Exercises

Respiration (breathing) plays a key role in both posture and spinal stabilisation. An altered breathing pattern can therefore compromise the deep spinal stabilisation system leading to spinal and peripheral joint pain.

Posture

A slumped posture is a common cause faulty breathing patterns as it compresses the diaphragm (a primary muscle used in breathing) and leads to muscle compensation. It is therefore important to maintain an upright posture. Reminding yourself about your posture can be helped by 'anchoring' it to something that you do multiple times a day e.g. waking through a door. Straightening up every time you walk through a door will then soon become automatic and help you maintain a correct posture throughout the day.



Belly Breathing Exercise

- Lie on your back in a relaxed position
- Place one hand just above your navel and one just below
- Breathe in through your nose in to your lower hand. If necessary push in with your lower hand as you try to breathe in.
- Breathe out through pursed lips.
- Perform 8-10 times slowly, twice a day



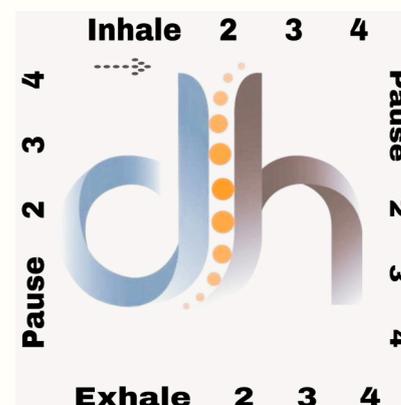
When comfortable in the exercise, you can also perform in standing and seated positions. You can utilise a mirror to monitor for excessive shoulder shrugging during inhalation.

Square Breath Exercise

Which you can also practice as a visualisation. It is also referred to as box breathing, 4x4 breathing or a 4-part breath.

If possible, it is usually a good idea to sit in a chair with your back supported and both of your feet on the floor. Really feel the support of the chair and floor under you.

- Begin by slowly exhaling all of your air out.
- Then, gently inhale through your nose to a slow count of four.
- Hold at the top of the breath for a count of four.
- Then gently exhale through your mouth for a count of four.
- At the bottom of the breath, pause and hold for the count of four.



If the image of a square works for you, you can visualise your breath and the pauses/holds in between the breath moving.

Square breathing can be useful in many situations, including: to calm yourself down when faced with stress or feeling overwhelmed, when you need to clear your head and reset, in a meeting at work, or before you go to sleep.



Diaphragm Relaxation

The diaphragm is primary muscle responsible for breathing. The diaphragm may have soft tissue restrictions or trigger points, altering its function. This simple relaxation technique can be employed to restore function to the diaphragm:

- Breathe in slightly.
- Grasps nostrils and shut mouth.
- Breathe in deeply against resistance.
- Unplug nostrils and finish inhaling, and then and breathe out very slowly through pursed lips.
- Repeat 2-3 times.