

YogaUp (Hong Kong) with Yoga Alliance
200 hours TTC - May 2020
Pranayama, Bandha, Kriya & Mudra

PRANAYAMA - The science of breathing

Breathing is a vital process that starts at the time of birth and stops at death. We inhale oxygen (O₂) & exhale carbon dioxide (CO₂).

PURAKA: Inhalation | RECHAKA: Exhalation

'Prana' is the vital energy and 'ayam' is control or to regulate. The process of controlling or regulating the vital energy is called *Pranayama*.

Regular practice of Pranayama can lead to spiritual awakening and self-realisation. Various types of Pranayama have different effects on the body, mind and spirit.

Generally, breathing includes inhalation and exhalation but Pranayama includes retention of breath known as *Kumbhaka* (in Sanskrit) and energy locking known as *Bandha* (in Sanskrit). These are very important processes in Pranayama.

KUMBHAKA (RETENTION OF BREATH)

The air can be retained in the lungs or outside the lungs. Retention of breath is divided into:

- **Antar Kumbhaka:** Inhalation Retention [after Inhaling]

Retention after inhalation helps in increasing oxygen in our blood, organs & every cell of the body. Increased supply of oxygen revitalises our body and regulates the flow of pranic energy throughout the body and makes every function of the body efficient.

- **Bahir Kumbhaka:** Exhalation Retention [after exhaling]

Retention after exhalation increases carbon dioxide in the blood, which stresses our nervous system. Continuous practice of Bahir Kumbhaka results in the nervous system becoming tolerant.

BANDHA (ENERGY LOCKS)

Bandha means to lock, hold or tighten and aims to move prana in particular areas.

There are 3 types of Bandhas:

- Mula Bandha – in the perineum
 - Lagu Mula Bandha - Mild contraction in the perineum
- Uddiyana Bandha – in the abdomen
- Jalandar Bandha - in the throat

PRANAYAMA PRACTICE

Breathing:

Always breathe through the nose and not the mouth unless otherwise specifically instructed.

Time:

The best time to practise pranayama is during the early morning when the body is fresh and the mind has very few impressions. If this is not possible another good time is just after sunset. Tranquilising pranayama may be performed before sleep. Try to practise regularly at the same time each day.

Place:

Practice in a quiet, clean and pleasant room which is well ventilated but not drafty. Practising in direct sunlight, air-conditioned room or under a fan may upset the body temperature.

3 IMPORTANT COMPONENTS

- **Asana (posture)**

Take any meditative posture like padmasana, Ardha padmasana, Vajrayana or simple sukhasana. Make sure your knees are in a comfortable position. Usually you tend to slouch your back but make conscious efforts to make it straight as you want an uninterrupted flow of your breath.

- **Mudra (hand gesture)**

You can use any mudras like Chin mudra, Jnana mudra, Dhyan mudra, Bhairavi mudra, Nasika mudra during the pranayama practice. There are 'panchamahabhutas' - five important elements of nature ie. water, earth, space, air & fire on our palms. The connection of these elements has certain positive impacts on our body that enhances the effects of pranayama.

- **Drishti (eyes)**

Closed eyes assists your consciousness to travel inwards easily to focus on your breath. Keeping it open certainly distracts you but closed eyes helps you bring more awareness.

NATURAL BREATHING

It is the starting point of the breathwork. Sit in any comfortable meditative posture, keeping your spine erect and your shoulders rolled back and relaxed. Make sure there is no discomfort in the knees. Take any mudra (hand gesture) and gently close your eyes. Start observing your natural breath. Observe the depth and the length of your inhalation and exhalation. Observe the movement of your chest and your belly. Anchor your mind with your breath. Become aware of your breathing pattern.

Ratio: 1:1, 1:2, 1:4, 1:8

Count: Gradually, increase the count from 4 to 6 to 8 and so on as per your comfort.

ABDOMINAL BREATHING

Anatomy:

In abdominal breathing, we use the diaphragm. In inhalation the diaphragm moves downward contracting the abdominal organs and on exhalation the diaphragm will release back to its original place. If we use the diaphragm then the lower lobes of the lungs are being used, improving their efficiency and giving a positive effect to the heart, liver, stomach and intestine. This breathing exercise helps us to slow down our breathing which leads us to live longer.

Limitation:

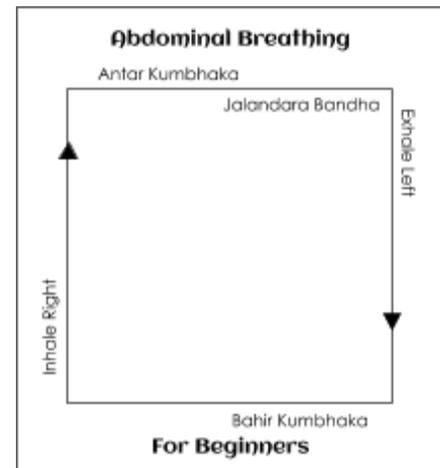
Needs to be practiced in an empty stomach.

Avoid retention in case of:

- Pregnancy
- Menstruation
- Heart condition
- High & low blood pressure

Benefits:

- Massages the liver stomach and intestines
- Lowers the respiratory rate
- Lowers the blood pressure
- Improves cardiac functions
- Improves oxygenation of blood and circulation
- Helps with relaxation
- Strengthens the nervous system
- Helps with migraine and vertigo
- Calms the mind
- Good preparation for pranayama



Technique:

Once your mind is anchored to your breath slowly restrict the movement of your chest completely and focus on breathing only from the belly. For better understanding keep your right palm on your belly and left palm on your chest. Now as you inhale your right palm will feel the expansion of the belly and as you exhale your right palm will feel the contraction of the belly. Left palm on your chest is to monitor the movement of your chest during inhalation and exhalation. As you inhale, the belly blows out as you exhale belly contracts back in.

Inhale - Belly out | Exhale - Belly in.

Pattern: Inhale, Antar Kumbhaka & Jalandara Bandha, Exhale, Bahir Kumbhaka

Kumbhaka: Antar & Bahir Kumbhaka

Bhandha: Jalandara Bandha

Ratio: 1:1:1:1

Count: Gradually, increase the count from 4 to 6 to 8 and so on as per your comfort

NADI SHUDDHI (Anulom Vilom, Alternate Nostril Breathing)

Anatomy:

Nadi Shuddhi is a Sanskrit name for purification of subtle energy channels. In yogic philosophy, the two main energy channels are *Ida & Pingala*. The left nostril is *Ida* (Moon principle or mind) & the right nostril is *Pingala* (Sun principle or body). It is the practice to balance the physical and mental energy. Balancing *Ida & Pingala* helps in reducing stress, anxiety & depression.

Limitation:

- Heart surgery
- Brain surgery
- Blocked nose

Avoid retention in case of:

- Pregnancy
- Menstruation
- Heart condition
- High & low blood pressure

Benefits:

- Helpful to balance emotions during pregnancy
- Improves lung capacity
- Balances the body, mind and breath
- Relieves stress and anxiety
- Balances digestive system, respiratory system, nervous system, cardiovascular

Technique:

Take any meditative or comfortable posture keeping your spine straight and your shoulders rolled back. Place the left-hand in Chin Mudra on the knee and right-hand in Nasika Mudra. Close the right nostril with the thumb of Nasika Mudra and inhale deeply from the left nostril. After inhalation, close the left nostril with the help of the ring finger of *Nasika Mudra*, open the right nostril and exhale from the right. after exhalation from the right nostril, inhale back from the right nostril, close the right nostril nostril, open the left nostril and exhale from the left nostril. This completes your one round. Repeat the cycle as many times as you feel comfortable.

Pattern: Close Right -

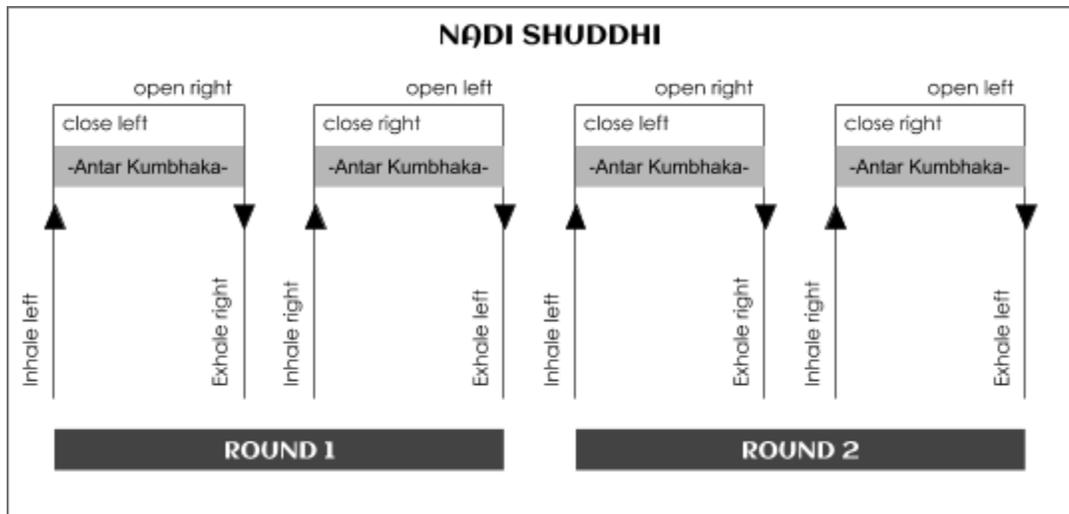
Inhale Left, Close Left (Antar Kumbhaka) Open Right, Exhale Right -

Inhale Right, Close Right (Antar Kumbhaka) Open Left, Exhale Left - Repeat

Kumbhaka: Antar Kumbhaka

Bhandha: No Bandha

Ratio: 1:1:1



KAPALBHATI (Breath of Fire)

Anatomy:

This is a breathing practice but it is classified under cleansing techniques. The literal meaning of 'kapal' is skull and 'bhati' is light or shining. So, kapalbhati means increasing the efficiency of the organs situated in the skull. KAPALBHATI also helps to clear out and purify the mucus, dust and carbon particles from the respiratory tract. Because there is an intense contraction of the abdomen in the process of forceful exhalation, all the blockages from abdominal organs are released making their functions smoother.

Limitations:

- Hernia
- Lower back problem
- Menstruation
- Pregnancy
- High blood pressure
- Vertigo and epilepsy
- Heart problem
- Avoid doing it before going to bed

Benefits:

- Tones the digestive organs
- Reduces constipation and indigestion
- Strengthens Nervous System
- Helpful for diabetes
- Improves lung capacity
- Helpful for Respiratory problems
- Improves circulation
- Energises mind, overcomes sleep, laziness and lethargy

Technique:

Sit in any meditative or comfortable posture with the head spine straight and the hands rested on the knees in chin mudra. Close your eyes, relax your face, body and mind. Start with a few rounds of natural breathing and as you feel ready inhale deeply and start exhaling forcefully, feeling the contraction on your abdomen. Inhalation is passive and effortless breathing comes from the abdomen not the chest. Awareness remains on rhythmic contraction of the diaphragm and abdomen during exhalation. The inhalation is merely a reflection. Keep the face relaxed and the spine straight throughout the practice. New practitioners should gradually increase their practice of Kapalbhatai.

No Kumbhaka & No Bandha

Ideal Ratio: 120 reps in 1 min

UJJAYI (The Victorious Breathing)

Anatomy:

It stimulates the nadis, or energy channels, in the sinuses and at the back of the throat, which, in turn, promotes mental clarity and focus. This is also called psychic breath. Psychosomatic disease and stress related ailments in particular can be effectively treated with this practice. It stimulates the parasympathetic nervous system. This pranayama is very effective for the relaxation of the body and mind.

Limitation:

Avoid retention in case of:

- Pregnancy
- Menstruation
- Heart condition
- High & low blood pressure

Benefits:

- Soothes the nervous system
- Improves lung capacity
- Helpful for reducing insomnia
- Balances the body, mind and breath
- Helps to relieve stress related problems
- Prepares for meditation
- Reduces throat related issues like thyroid.

Technique:

Here, we use the muscles that we would use to cause a glass to fog (only that you close the mouth). You can also imagine a hole in your throat and inhale and exit through that hole. You will hear a hissing sound or you can even compare it to the sound of an ocean of inhalation and exhalation by compressing the epiglottis in the throat.

Pattern: Inhale, Antar Kumbhaka (Jalandara/ Uddiyaan/Lagu Mul Bandha), Exhale, Bahir Kumbhaka

Kumbhaka: Antar Kumbhaka & Bahir Kumbhaka

Bhandha: Jalandara Bandha

Ratio: 1:1:1:1

BHRAMARI (Humming Bee Pranayama)

Anatomy:

As the name suggests, in this pranayama a humming sound of a bee is made and this sound stimulates the parasympathetic nervous system which induces muscular relaxation, reduces cerebral tensions, lowers the blood pressure and calms the mind.

Limitations:

- Ear infections
- Ear Problem

Avoid retention in case of:

- Pregnancy
- Menstruation
- Heart condition
- High & low blood pressure

Benefits:

- Helpful for pregnancy
- Strengthens the nerves
- Heals neuro-muscular injuries
- Helps with respiratory system
- Helpful for reducing stress, anxiety and depression
- Helps with insomnia

Technique:

Sit in any meditative comfortable posture with the spine uplifted, shoulders roll back and your palms rested on your knees. Start the practice with natural breathing and bring the awareness to the breath. Gradually, bring the awareness to the throat. Watch the breath there and inhale deeply through your nostrils and while exhalation make a humming sound slowly increasing the volume and lengthening the exhalation. After a while relax and recognise the resonance throughout the head and face.

Pattern: Inhale, Antar Kumbhaka (Jalandara/ Uddiyaan/Lagu Mula Bandha), Exhale, Bahir Kumbhaka

Kumbhaka: Antar Kumbhaka & Bahir Kumbhaka

Bhandha: Jalandara Bandha

Ratio: 1:1:1:1

SHITALI / SHITKARI (Cooling Breath)

The word "shitali" means cooling in sanskrit and it's taken from the original word sheetal which is soothing or cold. The purpose of sheetali/shitkari is to reduce the body temperature removing the excess heat accumulated in the system. The air passing via the tongue cools the blood. This may have a positive effect on the endocrine glands and nervous system. It stimulates the parasympathetic nervous system which induces muscular relaxation and is very effective for stress management. It also harmonises the secretion of the reproductive organs, lowers the high blood pressure and purifies the blood. It is also very effective for hyperacidity or even ulcers.

Limitations:

- Constipation
- Low blood pressure
- Asthma and nasal allergy
- Avoid while suffering from cold or sore throat
- Depression
- Those who are trying to reduce their weight should avoid it.

Benefits:

- Lowers high blood pressure
- Soothes thirst and hunger
- Helpful for temper
- Calming and cooling
- Good for stress relief
- Acidity and hypertension
- Ulcers

Technique:

Shitali - Sit in any comfortable meditative posture with your spine uplifted. Hands and chin or or Nan Woodrow. Ice gently closed full stop and took a few natural dreads. Up open the mouth, stick the tongue out and roll the edges to make a tube. Up up.in hill people eat through the tongue into the mouth normally and close the mouth hold as long as possible through the nose.

Shitkari - Gently clench the teeth together haha leave the tongue free or touch between the teeth with the tip of the tongue inhale deeply through the teeth close the mouth hold the breath in for as long as possible and exhale through the nose.

Pattern: Inhale, Antar Kumbhaka (Jalandara/ Uddiyaan/Lagu Mula Bandha), Exhale, Bahir Kumbhaka

Kumbhaka: Antar Kumbhaka & Bahir Kumbhaka

Bhandha: Jalandara Bandha

Ratio: 1:1:1:1

KRIYAS - (Cleansing Techniques)

Kriyas are good to get rid of impurities and to balance the imbalance. Kriyas are not only for physical well-being but also for mental well-being. It not only helps us to get rid of all the toxins but also strengthens our physical body, breath and mind. Some Kriyas can be done once in a week, some can be done once in a month and some once in a year.

Dhouti Kriyas are the techniques that prepare the practitioner for the rhythmic breathing wrong breathing patterns. It involves forceful expelling the wind from the stomach.

Limitations:

Should be avoided on the days when you have had heavy meals, acidic meals or alcohol.

Avoid or work carefully -

- Vertigo & epilepsy
- Blood pressure
- Recent abdominal surgeries & Hernia
- Backache
- Neck pain

Benefits:

- Correct and tunes the breathing, makes breath soft and long
- Massages abdominal organs, keeps them active and healthy
- Develops heavy breathing pace
- Powerful practice for stressed people
- Good for digestive issues
- Balances samana vayu and apana vayu

Technique:

Mukha Dhouti - Keep the legs shoulder-width apart (about 2 feet distance) slightly bent forward without arching your back keeping your spine erect, shoulder away from your ears and rest palms on the knees. Keep the body relaxed and inhale deeply through the nostrils, exhale forcefully through the mouth like a blower applying Uddiyana Bandha, followed by Jalandar Bandha. After retaining your breath for a few counts, release the locks gently (before you run out of breath) and Inhale again and repeat the cycle.

Agni Sara - Keep the legs shoulder-width apart (about 2 feet distance) slightly bent forward without arching your back keeping your spine erect, shoulder away from your ears and rest palms on the knees. Keep the body relaxed and inhale deeply through the nostrils, exhale forcefully through the mouth like a blower applying Uddiyana Bandha, followed by Jalandar Bandha. Now slowly move the abdomen in and out rhythmically. As you gain more control, increase the number of repetition and speed of movement. Before you run out of breath release the locks gently and Inhale again and repeat the cycle.

Start with 10 rounds of Mukha Dhouti & 10 Rounds of Agni Sara before asana practice.

Introduction to NAULI kriya:

NAULI is an abdominal kriya in which isolated contraction and rolling manipulation of the abdominal recti muscles which form the front liner wall of the abdominal cavity are accomplished. There are four types of NAULI:

- Madhyam Nauli (centre)
- Dakshina Nauli (right)
- Vamana Nauli (left)
- Nauli chalana

Limitations:

- Avoid in case of acute ulcers in stomach
- For one year after abdominal surgery
- People with a weak lung efficiency try under expert guidance
- Avoiding hypertension
- Ischemic heart disease
- Serious backache
- Hernia
- Menstruation

Benefits:

- Asthma
- Respiratory
- Stimulates and activates the abdominal organs
- Stimulates the intestines
- Tones recti muscles.
- Helps to relieve constipation, piles and gastritis
- PCOD
- Impotency
- Bowl issues

SEQUENCE of Pranayama:

Combining with Asana Practice

Beginning: Mukha Dhauti & Agnisar

During the Asana Practice: Ujjayi

End: Kapalbhatai, Nadi Shuddhi & Brahmari

Regular Pranayama Practice

1. Natural Breathing - (10 mins)
2. Abdominal Breathing - (10 mins)
3. Nadi Shuddhi - (20 times)
4. Kapalbhatai - Jnana Mudra (3 sets x 30 reps)
5. Brahmari - Bhairavi / Bhairava Mudra (15 times)
6. Shitkari - Chin Mudra (10 times)