



# Nadi Shodhana: Alternate Nostril Breathing

This breathing exercise is restorative and modulating to your precious nervous system. And since the nervous system affects all of your other systems, the benefits of nadi shodhana are far-reaching, especially when practiced routinely and for longer periods of time.

Nadi means 'channel' or 'flow' in Sanskrit, and shodhana means 'cleansing' or 'clearing.' This highlights its ability to clear and balance your energy channels, allowing proper energy flow throughout your entire mind-body.

## When to practice?

Nadi shodhana (as with most pranayamas) is best practiced on an empty stomach. Early morning and/or before bed are excellent times for a daily breath routine, but this breath is also recommended as needed throughout the day during times of stress, anxiety, concentration issues, procrastination, fear, or feelings of exhaustion. Its modulating effects are unique and effective.



## BENEFITS:

- Improves concentration and mental clarity
- Increases oxygen to the brain and endocrine system
- Reduces stress and anxiety
- Helps balance hormones (i.e. lower cortisol, increased serotonin)
- Can help lower heart rate and blood pressure
- Improved respiration (better oxygen intake and flow)
- Clears and releases toxins
- Can improve quality of sleep

## \*Minding the Gap\*

Sit with the "Gap" after you have completed the pranayama practice each time. This Gap is the fruit of the practice, the sense of clarity or peace or awareness that is often created from doing pranayama. Give your mind-body the gift of time with this rare and truly medicinal state. Sit with eyes closed in the Gap for at least 1 min, but more if it calls to you. Notice how you feel before and after each practice.

There is no wrong experience, but if you feel any pain or shortness of breath during or afterwards, please cease the breath and consult with your doctor.

*2015 research on functional MRI imaging looked at cerebrospinal fluid flow into the brain during breathing & found "the present results unambiguously identify inspiration as the most important driving force for CSF flow in humans." Let deep breathing nourish your brain.*

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## Instructions

Choose a comfortable sitting position—either cross-legged on the floor (with a cushion or blanket to support the spine), seated against the wall if support is needed, or in a chair with your feet flat on the floor. Allow your spine to lengthen so that your back, neck, and head are erect throughout the practice. Gently close your eyes if this feels comfortable.

- Connect to your breath. Begin by taking a full, deep inhalation followed by a slow, gentle exhalation.
- Find Vishnu mudra (optional). Fold the tips of the index and middle fingers inward until they touch the palm at the base of the right thumb (Vishnu mudra). You will alternately use the right thumb to close the right nostril and the right ring and pinky fingers (together) to close the left nostril.
- Inhale through the left nostril. Use the right thumb to close the right nostril. Exhale gently, but fully, through the left nostril. Keeping the right nostril closed, inhale through the left nostril and deep into the belly. As you inhale, allow the breath to travel upward along the left side of the body. Pause briefly at the crown of the head.
- Exhale through the right nostril. Use the ring and pinky fingers of the right hand to gently close the left nostril and simultaneously release the right nostril. Exhale through the right nostril, surrendering the breath down the right side of the body. Pause gently at the bottom of the exhalation.
- Inhale through the right nostril. Keeping the left nostril closed, inhale once again through the right nostril, allowing the breath to travel up the right side of the body.
- Exhale through the left nostril. Then again, use the right thumb to close the right nostril as you release the left nostril. Exhale through the left nostril, surrendering the breath back down the left side of the body. Pause gently at the bottom of the exhalation.

This completes one round of nadi shodhana. Please continue for as many rounds as you'd like, focusing your awareness on the pathway of the breath—up one side of the body (from the pelvic floor to the crown of the head) and back down the other side of the body (from the crown of the head to the pelvic floor). Keep the breath slow, gentle, fluid, and relaxed throughout the practice. Even a few minutes of this breath are beneficial, but spending 10-15 minutes brings even greater benefit, especially to your endocrine/hormone system.

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