How to Stabilize the Mind and Burn Fat with Diaphragm Breathing

Let’s take a thorough look at one of the most well-founded and stress-relieving breathing techniques out there: diaphragmatic breathing. Even though most people have most likely never heard of it, new research suggests that using this breathing technique can give quite a punch — especially when fighting the battle of the bulge.

The average person at rest takes about 16 breaths per minute. This means we breathe about 960 breaths an hour, 23,040 breaths a day, 8,409,600 a year. Unless we get a lot of exercise. The person who lives to 80 will take about 672,768,000 breaths in a lifetime!

It’s definitely stressful for many women both in peri- and post-menopause years to maintain a healthy body weight. Hormonal imbalance and related body changes can, over time, slow down metabolism. As this happens, it becomes easier to gain weight and, unfortunately, more difficult to lose it.

This is the real reason why most conventional weight loss plans as well as weight loss fad diets don’t really help as you get older. The issue really isn’t how many calories you consume, so restricting or counting calories most likely will not lead to successful and long-lasting weight loss.
But wait — all is not lost. Practicing diaphragmatic breaking may be your answer. While this may seem too simple to be believe, a new study proves it works, and how it works.

Diaphragmatic Breathing Research

A 2018 study in the *Journal of Physical Therapy Science* reveals that practicing a breathing technique called diaphragmatic breathing can boost metabolism in adults, by switching on fat burning. And, it includes lots of other health benefits as well.

The study had a total of 38 participants. Half of the participants practiced diaphragmatic breathing, also known as “deep belly breathing”, where you draw your breath in deeply enough to stretch your diaphragm. The other half practiced different breathing exercises while using a feedback breathing device. In the diaphragmatic breathing group, researchers found an important difference in total oxygen intake and resting metabolic rate. Improvements in the other group, using the breathing device, were not experienced.

What are the Health Benefits of Diaphragmatic Breathing?

This breathing method can give you many health benefits including the two important benefits below.

The first mechanism of action is a measure of oxygen intake. When you inhale deeply with the “belly breath,” your diaphragm relaxes and moves downward and creates space in your chest, allowing your lungs to expand. Greater oxygen flow in the body boosts the ability of individual cells to burn calories. This increases energy levels and makes weight loss much easier.

Greater oxygen flow helps individual cells burn calories resulting in increased energy levels and easier weight loss.

What is concerning is that most people are shallow breathers. Shallow breathing is when the breath stays largely in the upper area of the lungs, thus the diaphragm doesn’t get much of a workout. The results of shallow breathing is that we don’t get the metabolic boost that increased oxygen delivers. Most don’t know that shallow breathing is associated with stress – which none of us need. So when you need the health benefits of deep breathing the most, you naturally do it the least.

Shallow breathing is associated with stress!

The second mechanism of action is the result deep breathing has on heart rate variability. Heart rate variability is a ratio between between your sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems. Plainly speaking, the sympathetic is your “fight or flight” response while the
parasympathetic is your relaxation and healing response. Diaphragmatic breathing naturally stimulates the parasympathetic system, which lowers your stress response by lowering cortisol levels — which then helps to lowers blood pressure, supports immune function, as well as other health benefits.

Diaphragmic breathing also can help to strengthen the diaphragm and enable it to take on more of the very necessary work of breathing for those suffering from COPD.

**How Is Diaphragmatic Breathing Performed?**

It’s not difficult to learn diaphragmatic breathing and to make it a regular habit. Just remember that practice makes perfect.

1. Find a comfortable, quiet place to sit or lie down. You can try it sitting in a chair, sitting cross-legged, or lying on your back. If lying on you back you can use a small, flat pillow under your head and knees, if needed.

2. Place one hand on your belly, below your rib cage, and the other hand on your upper chest.

3. Begin to breathe in slowly through your nose, drawing the air in deeply towards your lower belly. The hand on your chest should remain still at first, while the one on your belly should rise.

4. As you exhale, breathing out through pursed lips, tighten your abdominal muscles and allow them to fall inward towards your spine. The hand on your belly should move down to its original position.

Practice this breathing pattern daily by doing 10 in-out repetitions 2-3 times daily. After more practice, try to increase your repetitions. Soon you will be amazed by the benefits of better energy levels, a faster metabolism, lower blood pressure — and easier weight loss.

If you feel lightheaded at any time, discontinue the breathing exercise. If you’re standing, sit down until you’re no longer lightheaded.

**Mindful Breathing Bonus Suggestion:** While you are breathing in slowly say to yourself: “breathe in health”. While you exhale slowly say to yourself: “breathe out disease” or any health concern you may be experiencing.

**Hint:** It will take some effort at first to use your diaphragm correctly — but, as I said above, practice makes perfect. Once you are more comfortable with the technique, you can try it while sitting in a chair, with your knees bent and your shoulders, head, and neck relaxed.
Diaphragmatic breathing, also known as mindfulness, is an impressive tool to help you relax, lower your heart rate and blood pressure and reduce the harmful effects of the stress your body. All of these are reasons why diaphragmatic breathing is frequently implemented in meditation and other mind-body techniques. Regular deep breathing can also benefit many other functions such as supporting hormone balance, boosting core muscle strength, enhancing your immune system and stimulating your body’s ability to tolerate vigorous exercise. Other research indicates that diaphragmatic breathing can also help with insomnia, restful sleep, heart rate issues and even PTSD.

Just think — all of these great health benefits just from changing your breathing technique. Take several diaphragmatic breaths right now and watch what happens.

When life happens, just stop and breathe and experience the benefits of diaphragmatic breathing!
REFERENCES


