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Breathing is with no doubt something nobody can live without. The first thing you a baby does when he is born is screaming to get his first breath to begin his life and the last thing we all do before we leave life is one final breath. It is estimated that we breathe around 25,000 times a day. Human beings have been proved to use only one third of their lung capacity leaving the rest which is 2/3rds unused. This confirms the increased occurrences of respiratory diseases related allergies. The quality of our breathing affects our health in many ways as every cell within our body requires oxygen to perform its duties properly and hence lack of oxygen has its impacts even on the cells.

Surprisingly, there are many ways to improve our breathing:

Buteyko Method:

Buteyko is a Russian doctor who pioneered a method of breathing which is known to be one of the most effective ways of breathing along with treating asthma and breathing disorders.

Buteyko Test:

Measure the level of your Carbon dioxide by: breathing out, hold your nose and then count in seconds until you need to breathe in. a count of 60 corresponds to a level of 6.5 % CO₂ in the lungs and perfect health. Between 40-50 is good and below 30 indicates health problems. People with disorders like asthma will not be able to hold their breath more than 10 seconds.

Buteyko measure is simply trying to breathe only through your nose while retaining your breath so you can take a longer pause at the end of the out breath.

T'ai Chi

It is a non combative martial art practiced in China and now all over the world. It does not have any specific breathing techniques but regular practice of T'ai chi improves breathing and keeps stresses away.

Breathing Exercise:

Easy breath control: place your hands with your palms under your chest, on your ribs and your fingers loosely interlocked. Inhale slowly through your nose on the count of four. As you inhale, concentrate on letting your ribs expand laterally, your fingers should gently part. Do not let your ribs jut forward. Exhale slowly. Repeat.

Alternate Nostril Breathing:

It is a yoga technique widely used now for its effectiveness. Its main aim is to harmonize the left and right sides of the brain. Two breaths form together one round. Place your thumb at the base of your right nostril and pinch it closed while you breathe in through your left nostril. Relax your thumb and position your little finger at the base of the left nostril and pinch it closed. Breathe out through your right nostril.

Reflexology:

Having regular reflexology sessions relieves sinus congestions and improves breathing.

Reflexology works by stimulating the different reflex points on the hands/ feet and hence improves the flow energy and congestions. The main areas to work during a session are sinus, chest area, lung area, nose, throat.

Yoga Postures:

Bridge pose of yoga helps opening the chest area and improves breathing by regular exercise.

How to do the bridge pose:

Lie flat on your back, arms by your sides. Bend your knees, feet hip-width apart, just in front of the buttocks. On an in-breath, lift your pelvis and raise your back so that you "stand" on your feet and shoulders. Breathe normally. On the out-breath, slowly lower yourself to the floor so that your buttocks can reach the floor.

Other natural ways to improve your sinuses/ lungs and air passages:

Garlic: strengthens and revitalizes due to its volatile oil which is largely excreted through the lungs. Garlic was widely used in ancient Egypt, traditional Chinese Medicine and in Greece due to its known antiseptic effects.

Vitamin A: main sources include carrots, fish liver oil, liver, eggs and dairy products. However, you should note that having too much of the dairy products, especially milk, can cause some respiratory problems to occur.

Vitamin C: to boost your immunity and protect against viral throat infections.

Quercetin: a component present in many fruits such as apples, raspberries, red grapes, citrus fruits and onions. Quercetin is a member of a large group of water soluble compounds called flavonoids. It acts as anti-histamine and hence helps in calming allergic reactions. People who eat apples five times a week have a better lung function than others in addition to lowering the risk of respiratory diseases.

Zinc: boosts immunity and people with zinc deficiency often develop frequent colds and have a poor sense of taste and smell. Factors such as smoking, high tea and coffee consumption all deplete our zinc reserves. You can obtain zinc from sources such as oysters, crabmeat, liver, mussels, wholegrain products and eggs.

Lavender Sinus Massage: inflammation of the sinuses may be the reason behind breathing difficulties, congestions and above all headaches. Lavender is a natural essential oil which acts as an

analgesic and hence its healing qualities make it ideal for painful sinuses. You can apply essential oil after adding it to a carrier oil and massage your sinuses gently.

Quick Self-Massage Sequence:

Place your hands above your eyebrows so that your fingers are close to each other above the point between your two brows. Make small circles with your fingers, working your way across the forehead. Apply gentle pressure. Then place your middle fingers on both sides of the nose, breathe in and press firmly for a few seconds then release. Repeat that three times. Another massage way is to place your index finger sides of your nose (lower sides of the nose). Press gently, holding and releasing. Repeat three times.

Last suggested technique is to draw your fingers along the cheekbones applying pressure strokes. Then use your thumbs to make small circular movements along this line.

Things to be avoided are mainly all products including white flour such as pasta, cake as well as chocolates and sweets. Also substituting cow milk with soya milk is a good way .

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