

# Relaxation Exercise: Diaphragmatic Breathing

Also called deep breathing, or belly breathing, breathing with the diaphragm is a helpful way to create a relaxed state. Over time, and in stressful situations, we tend to engage in “chest breathing,” resulting in shallow, more constricted, tense breaths. Diaphragmatic breathing allows for full oxygen exchange, slows the heartbeat, and lowers blood pressure, creating a state of relaxation.

## Try these simple steps:

**STEP 1** → Lie on your back with your knees bent or sit in a chair with both feet on the floor.

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

**STEP 3** → Breathe in through your nose, taking the air in deeply, and letting your belly expand.

**STEP 4** → Breathe out through pursed lips, tighten and contract your abdominal muscles, letting your belly fall as you breathe out completely.

**STEP 5** → Imagine that your belly is a balloon, and as you inhale, the balloon inflates, and as you exhale, it deflates.

**STEP 6** → As you practice, the hand on your belly rises and falls with each inhalation and exhalation, while the hand on your chest remains still.

