

Yoga: Relieving Asthma

Yoga teaching dates back thousands of years and stems from the ancient Vedic wisdom often referred to as the Science of Life. The science of breath and the conscious utilization of what is usually an unconscious process is the specialized province of Yoga with its system. Its system developed from centuries of observation and application of recognized traditional techniques used in the art of breath control. Study was made of the effect of different breathing habits upon both physical and psychological health as well as spiritual well-being. The science therefore extends beyond the western approach to the subject and offers information of vital interest to all, as we share the common life sustaining need to breathe every moment of our lives. The need for air and the associated process of breathing holds its own as the most vital life nourishment, more important than food and water. It is no wonder that we tend to panic when the natural pumping of air and life into our bodies is interrupted and this is exactly what happens to a person, whether child or adult, when the spasms of asthma occur. Healing practices of yoga are employed in India under appropriate supervision relating to the traditional Indian customs or under western medical professional care, according to choice. However, yogic techniques for home use in the West, as outlined here, are usually applied in conjunction with orthodox treatment and relief through drugs and sprays according to current medical practice. But these should be gradually reduced as the sufferer becomes independent of the need. It is advisable to maintain medical supervision particularly with children, many of whom will readily respond to the following simple exercises and suggestions.

First Preparation - Ensure that both nostrils are free. Apart from the obvious reason that the air passages must be unimpeded to allow full inhalation and absorption of oxygen by the lungs there is an additional purpose that relates to the need to balance the flow of air through the nostrils as it directly affects the brain, so intimately placed behind. This balance guarantees a calm nervous system. So we begin with ensuring that the nostrils are both free of mucus. Each nostril should be free of obstruction and this condition maintained if possible throughout. Check to see if both your nostrils are open now. If you cannot draw air through let us say the Right nostril and blowing the nose is no remedy, then try the following: Place the closed right fist (in this case) under the left armpit and press the arm down so that the knuckles press into a spot on the underside of the arm and on the torso also. It is important that you find the 'right spot' that will be quite tender. Holding this position, take some deep breaths maintaining the pressure for a minute or two. It is usual that if the nostril is blocked for no other reason, simple nerve pressure in this manner will be successful and for a time both nostrils will then be free. Be patient until you are successful. Of course reverse the process in the case of a blocked Left nostril. It must be understood that it is natural for one nostril to be open and functioning more freely than the other and this alternating pattern ensures that our natural air conditioning system works well in maintaining the necessary balance for health. There is also a period when both nostrils are equally free between times. Keep a check on this and you will observe differences throughout the day. The technique will certainly help in cases of chronic conditions but if suffering acute asthma it is likely that you will have to resort rather to the simple method of applying cold water compress, or even iced water to the bridge of the nose and this in itself can sometimes be helpful in relieving nasal congestion and reducing the intensity of an asthma attack.

Breathing Exercises The following disciplines are related to periods in the day when the asthma sufferer is temporarily free of symptoms:

Balancing Inhalation and Exhalation It is common to find that each individual varies in regard to ease of inhalation and exhalation and that there are greater capacities and difference in degree of air flow in the dual process. In the case of asthma, it is recognized that it is usually the exhalation that must gradually be improved. This can be done quite simply.

Extend the Exhalation Begin with breathing in to an easy count, say of 4 seconds and breathing out for the same, to establish a rhythmic flow. Continue for a minute or two and then make a change. Inhale to a count of 4 but exhale trying to double the time to a count of 8. If this is difficult, reduce to a count of 3 in and 6 out. Continue for a few minutes only and then rest. Regular use of this simple exercise will draw your attention to what is required regarding elementary control of the breath.

Adjustments to the Diet Asthma is known to be exacerbated, if not caused, by unnatural chemical agencies in the diet and chemicals and toxins in the environment of the patient. Also the general constituents of diet must be considered, not only because of allergies but by any imbalance. Asthmatics often have built up an imbalance through favouring a diet with too much carbohydrate content, comprised of refined sugars and processed starches. Dairy products are to be avoided altogether for a period of time if one is serious about reducing symptoms of this disease. Increasing use of herbs in the diet is important with some being specific remedies for respiratory complaints. No amount of attention to breath control will cure anyone suffering from asthma created by toxic materials ingested within his own body and which are now stifling him. Some asthmatics are obviously suffering from a situation of internal body pollution and a heavily burdened toxic bloodstream that produces symptoms such as dull eyes, nasal congestion, mouth breathing and frightening asthma attacks. Generally however the approach to relieving asthma involves attention to all the main health factors and there is much to be gained by continuing to learn what yoga therapy offers. There are many simple, natural practices that offer additional or alternative methods of therapy that can prove effective in relieving asthma and may be safely be done at home. It is therefore important, in assessing a natural approach, that attention is given to correct the basic factors of preparation. The nostrils must be free and the nutritional aspect adjusted before we look to the deep-seated nervous condition and the psychological factors behind this disease and realise how important a role relaxation plays in bringing relief.

About the Author

And eat a balanced diet that is lower in calories and fat. For some, salt and sodium content in your diet, and boxes 10 and 11 on pages.