

# YOUR Guide to Breathing through The Nose

We have two routes for getting air in and out of our lungs either through the **nose** or the **mouth**. Breathing through the nose is a healthier and a more efficient way to breathe

## Why is the Nose Important?

- It acts as a filter, trapping small particles such as pollen and dust
- It warms and humidifies the air, preventing dryness in the airways and lungs.
- It encourages diaphragmatic breathing controlling how fast and deep we breathe- helping to ensure a slower, more regular pattern.
- It helps with speech and voice control and with eating and drinking
- It produces **Nitric Oxide** which is important for healthy breathing.

## Nitric Oxide (NO)

**Nitric Oxide** helps the body's immune system to fight infection as it has antibacterial, anti-viral and antifungal properties. It improves the lungs' ability to absorb oxygen and helps the body transport the oxygen by causing blood vessels to dilate.

## Mouth Breathing

Mouth breathing all the time may result in a variety of symptoms such as:

- A feeling of not being able to breathe deeply, or get a satisfying breath in (air hunger)
- Dry mouth, bad breath, and gum disease
- Frequent chest infections and irritable cough
- Difficulty in swallowing, eating, and drinking.
- Snoring and poor sleep.

In children, mouth breathing can cause crooked teeth, facial deformities, or poor growth.

There are times when breathing through the mouth is necessary (see below) although sometimes mouth breathing becomes a habit even when the original blockage has been cleared.

- Nasal congestion, enlarged tonsils or adenoids, deviated septum, nasal polyps,
- Shape and size of jaw, teeth and nose (previous break)
- When exercising- particularly aerobic exercise which increases the body's demand for oxygen and therefore increases the rate and depth of breathing
- When feeling stressed or anxious. Stress activates the sympathetic nervous system which can lead to abnormal, shallow, rapid breathing.

# How to Breathe with your Nose

Consciously practicing breathing through your nose will help change habits.

It is usual for the amount of air entering each nostril to differ-one nostril will be delivering the air to the lungs to help with respiration- the other will be testing the air, we alternate from one nostril to the other during the day so you may feel it changing. If you find breathing through your nose difficult do not worry, you may only manage 2-3 breaths at a time, that's okay, keep practicing and it will get easier. Aim to practice little and often, setting yourself targets to increase the number of breaths, or length of time, you can manage.

If you are aware of blockages within your nasal cavities it may be advisable to see your Doctor. Remedies that may help include:

- Nasal sprays
- Sinus clearing medication
- Nasal Rinsing with saline solutions (Neil-med or Neti-pots)

There are many different breathing exercises that may help you gain control of your breathing.

- Simply trying to keep your mouth shut
- Try holding a sheet of paper between your lips for as long as you can
- Try humming a song.

**Yoga technique**- with your thumb block one nostril and breathe in through the open nostril- use your finger to block the other nostril and remove your thumb and breathe out. Repeat until your nose feels clear- you can alternate which nostril you breathe in and out of- some people find resting the forefinger in the middle of the forehead helps.

**Buteyko technique** In sitting, breathe out, close your mouth, pinch the nostrils closed and gently nod your head until you get the urge to breathe, keep the mouth closed, remove hand from your nose and breathe softly through your nose, if the nose is not cleared repeat the exercise up to 4 times.

*The Buteyko Method is a treatment method based on formal breathing exercises which helps normalise and improve breathing* <https://www.buteykobreathing.org>

**Practising Breathing Control** - [see the Your Guide to Good Breathing leaflet](#)

Practice for a few minutes as often as you can. The more familiar you are with quiet controlled breathing, the more easily you will be able to breathe through your nose and settle your breathing when you do become breathless.

For more information on breathing and videos [www.physiotherapyforbpd.org.uk](http://www.physiotherapyforbpd.org.uk)