

Buteyko Exercises in Summary

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Exercise 1: Unblocking your nose

Practice when your nose is blocked and tape your mouth at night (see website)

Take a small breath in (2 seconds) and a small breath out (3 seconds), then pinch your nose to hold your breath. Move your head up and down or sway your body from side to side for as long as you can hold your breath. When you feel a moderate to strong desire to breathe, release your nose and try to breathe through the nose if possible for about 1 minute to recover.

Repeat 5-6 times until the nose is clear.

Do this exercise any time you realise you are breathing through your mouth because your nose is blocked.

Do not hold your breath too long if your asthma is very severe and you feel very uncomfortable while holding your breath

Exercise 2 Reduced Breathing

Go gently if your CP <15. If CP <10 practice multiple short breath holds until you feel comfortable with this exercise.

Take 20 minutes out of your day, ideally in the morning and again before you go to bed to do this exercise. You need a timer, a comfortable chair (or meditation cushion), and a quiet space.

*Start by sitting in an upright, comfortable position.
Take your Pulse for 30 seconds. Multiply by 2 and record it.
Take your CP and record it.*

*Start by breathing calmly through your nose and take a few minutes to consciously relax.
Become aware of the breath entering and exiting your nostrils and try to breathe gently into your tummy (i.e. your tummy should gently go out as you inhale and relax towards your spine as you exhale).*

After some breaths begin counting your natural inhalation and exhalation.

Once you have established the natural rhythm of your breath, try to shorten your inhalations by 20-30% until you feel a slight need for air.

*Continue with reduced breathing for 4 minutes.
Take a rest for a few minutes, breathe normally but calmly.
Take your CP again, and resume.*

Repeat 2-5 cycles

Measure your Pulse and CP again a few minutes after the practice.

If you have done the process correctly, your Pulse/minute should have slowed down by 2-4 seconds and your CP should be 10-20% higher. You will also feel warmer, have more saliva in your mouth, and be more relaxed. All these are signs that the CO₂ levels have increased, causing your nervous system to relax.

Should a feeling of anxiety or panic arise, tell yourself to relax. If you feel yourself tense up, just breathe normally again. Gently continue to coax yourself into creating a slight air shortage until you feel

comfortable doing so. Beware of tensing your abdomen, shoulders, neck or chest muscles. Should that happen, take a break, relax and start again. While the inhalation will take some controlling on your behalf, the exhalation should always occur naturally on its own. Eventually you will notice a natural pause occurring after each exhalation. This is a very good sign that you are starting to breath correctly.

Here is an example of reducing your breath:

**Natural Breathing is 3 counts in, 3 counts out
Reduced breathing is 2 counts in, 3 counts out**

Variations:

Reduced Breathing with closed Nostril

Check which of your nostrils is partially blocked (one will usually be more blocked than the other) and close off the other one. You can do this by pressing with one finger against the side of the nostril, or you can tape that nostril up with paper tape. You can do this for 20 minutes or so while reading or watching TV. Don't forget to take the tape off when you go out!

Reduced Breathing with Cupped Hands

Another variation involves cupping your hands in front of your nose to create a small space into which to breathe. As your hands are very sensitive you can use them to detect how much airflow is reaching them from your nostrils. That way you can try to breathe ever more gently. The space will also accumulate your previously exhaled CO₂, thereby raising your CO₂ level intake on your next inhalation.

Exercise 3

Walking with your mouth closed

If your CP<20. Go gently within your capacity.

Go for a 20-30 minute walk where you walk with your mouth closed the entire time to create a slight need for air. In other words, walk at a pace that pushes you just enough to feel a slight air shortage, but never to the point that you need to open your mouth to breathe. If you do, take a rest until you can breathe gently through your nose again. Keep your breath calm, even and soft throughout. Do not push too hard, especially if you have a low CP (<20). Exercise 4

Exercise 4

Walking with breath holds

If your CP is above 15. Go gently if CP<20.

While walking take a short breath in, and a short breath out before holding your breath (either by pinching your nostrils or closing off the back of your throat). Walk between 5-20 steps before resuming normal, gentle breathing. Gain control over your breathing within 2 breaths after your breath hold. Do not push yourself beyond a moderate air shortage - you may end up creating symptoms. After 30 - 60 seconds of normal breathing, repeat. Do about 6-10 sets.

Variation: Walking with closed nostril

Another way to reduce breathing while exercising is to block one nostril (try to block the one that is hardest to breathe through).

Note: People who have a CP <10 (i.e. very severe asthma) should not practice any prolonged breath holds. Also people with serious illnesses, such as cancer, epilepsy, schizophrenia, sickle cell anaemia, very high blood pressure need to be very cautious. Pregnant women during first trimester especially, should also avoid doing breath holds. If you have any doubts, please contact a Buteyko practitioner.

Exercise 5

Steps

For children and teenagers and healthy adults.

While walking hold breath on the out breath and count the number of steps you can walk before you experience a medium to strong air shortage. As above, pinch your nose or close off your throat after a short breath in and a short breath out, and hold the breath while counting off the steps. When you resume breathing, calm your breath as quickly as possible (if not possible to do within 2-3 breaths, you are holding your breath too long). Take a break for 60 seconds or so and repeat.

Children should practice 6 repetitions, two or three times daily. They should keep practicing until they have achieved over 80 steps, and then maintain that level doing 3 sets of STEPS once a day. After 60 steps their symptoms are stable. After 80 steps they have no more symptoms.

Exercise 6

Multiple short breath holds

To stop asthma symptoms (wheezing and coughing) at their onset or for those with very low CP.

Please note: if after doing this exercise for 5 minutes your asthma symptoms are not improving, or if your attack is severe, use your rescue inhalers. If rescue inhalers do not work within 15 minutes, seek emergency medical help immediately.

Take a small breath in, a small breath out and hold your breath for 3-5 seconds. Breathe gently through the nose for 30 seconds and repeat. You can do hundreds of breath holds throughout the day to build up your CP and control your symptoms.