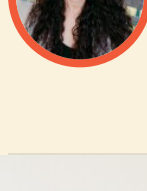


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Nadi Shodhana: How to Practice Alternate Nostril Breathing

YogaPranayamaStress



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Nadi Shodhana, or “alternate nostril breathing,” is a simple yet powerful technique that settles the mind, body, and emotions. You can use it to quiet your mind before beginning a meditation practice, and it is particularly helpful to ease racing thoughts if you are experiencing anxiety, stress, or having trouble falling asleep.

There are several different styles of *Nadi Shodhana*, but they all serve the purpose of creating balance and regulating the flow of air through your nasal passages. In fact, the term *Nadi Shodhana* means “clearing the channels of circulation.”

Benefits of Alternate Nostril Breathing

With just a few minutes of alternate nostril breathing, you can restore balance and ease in the mind and body. Sometimes when we feel frazzled or find ourselves doing too many things at once, it’s because energetically, we are out of alignment. This breath is great for restoring that necessary balance.

In addition to calming the mind and reversing stress, alternate nostril breathing also:

- Improves our ability to focus the mind
- Supports our lungs and respiratory functions
- Restores balance in the left and right hemispheres of the brain, and clears the energetic channels
- Rejuvenates the nervous system
- Removes toxins
- Settles stress

Whether you’re nervous about a project or presentation, anxious about a conversation, or just generally stressed out, *Nadi Shodhana* is a quick and calming way to bring you back to your center. If you find it difficult to settle into your meditations, try moving through a few rounds first, then remain seated and shift directly into stillness; this should help to ground you before meditation.

Nadi Shodhana Practice

Next time you find yourself doing too many things at once, or you sense panic or anxiety begin to rise, move through a few rounds of alternate nostril breathing. It’s a great way to hit the reset button for your mental state.

1. Take a comfortable and tall seat, making sure your spine is straight and your heart is open.
2. Relax your left palm comfortably into your lap and bring your right hand just in front of your face.
3. With your right hand, bring your pointer finger and middle finger to rest between your eyebrows, lightly using them as an anchor. The fingers we’ll be actively using are the thumb and ring finger.
4. Close your eyes and take a deep breath in and out through your nose.
5. Close your right nostril with your right thumb. Inhale through the left nostril slowly and steadily.
6. Close the left nostril with your ring finger so both nostrils are held closed; retain your breath at the top of the inhale for a brief pause.
7. Open your right nostril and release the breath slowly through the right side; pause briefly at the bottom of the exhale.
8. Inhale through the right side slowly.
9. Hold both nostrils closed (with ring finger and thumb).
10. Open your left nostril and release breath slowly through the left side. Pause briefly at the bottom.
11. Repeat 5-10 cycles, allowing your mind to follow your inhales and exhales.

Steps 5-9 represent one complete cycle of alternate nostril breathing. If you’re moving through the sequence slowly, one cycle should take you about 30-40 seconds. Move through 5-10 cycles when you’re feeling stressed, anxious, or in need of a reset button.

Tip: Consistency is helpful, so try to match the length of your inhales, pauses, and exhales. For example, you can start to inhale for a count of five, hold for five, exhale for five, hold for five. You can slowly increase your count as you refine your practice.

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