



# Vitality Natural Health Centre

260 Wyse Road, Suite 200, Dartmouth, NS, B3A 1N3  
 T 902.446.4072 F 902.446.4073  
 www.vitalitynaturalhealth.ca

## Journey to Health Newsletter Winter 2010

### Breathe Some Relaxation into Your Day Dr. Sarah Hardy, BSc(Hons), ND

**Are You Breathing?** “Of course I’m breathing”, you reply, “I’m alive aren’t I?” Perhaps a more complete question would be: Are you *breathing healthfully*? All too often, people spend their days in a distressed state of existence, complete with shallow, rapid breathing. The results of *poor breathing* can be very widespread throughout the body:

In the *nervous system*, it encourages anxiety, dizziness, poor memory, a sense of apprehension, and affecting balance.

It *depletes specific minerals* in the body encouraging spasms of a variety of muscles and reducing pain thresholds.

It triggers *smooth muscle cell contraction*. Smooth muscles make up all of the tubes in your body including blood vessels, the digestive tract and the respiratory tract. When these muscles are contracted it can contribute to an *increase in blood pressure* (because your heart has to pump against the resistance of closed vessels), *chest pain* (because the vessels that supply blood to the heart aren’t delivering enough oxygen), *constipation* (because your intestines aren’t moving properly) and *aggravation of asthma* (because the tubes leading to your lungs are not allowing enough air to pass).

It reduces oxygen release to all of the cells of your body, encouraging *general fatigue and pain*.

So how do you know when you are not breathing healthfully? Here are some signs:

High stress levels	Promote shallow, rapid breathing
Poor coping strategies for stress	
Restlessness	Your body’s attempts to get more oxygen into your system
Frequent yawning	
Frequent sighing	
Stiff neck and shoulder muscles	<i>Naturally</i> you should be using your diaphragm to breathe (the thin muscle between your lungs and abdomen). As you breathe in, your diaphragm lowers towards your belly, the space in your chest increases, your lungs fill with air and your belly moves out. As you breathe out, your diaphragm returns to its original position, air is pushed out of your lungs and your belly moves in. Without using your diaphragm, <b>shallow “chest” breathing</b> results and your neck and shoulder muscles are used to try and bring more air into your lungs.
Lack of belly movement with breath	

**NURTURE. TRANSFORM. HEAL.**

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The *transition to breathing healthfully* and reducing all of the above signs and symptoms requires practice. Choose a specific time to do it each day: as soon as you wake in the morning, while driving, sitting at a stop light, waiting in a line and/or before bed. There are multiple opportunities to fit in a few minutes of healthy breathing in every day.

### Practice the Complete Breath:

I. Benefits: purifies bloodstream, develops diaphragm, strengthens lungs, thorax and abdomen, increases resistance to colds, aids digestion, clears up phlegm, helps to lift depression, calms nervous system

### II. Technique:

1. Sit in a comfortably cross-legged position on the floor or in a chair with your feet flat on the floor.
2. Straighten your back, which will straighten your chest for easier breathing.
3. Inhale slowly through the nose, breathing deeply, consciously.
4. Take 5 seconds to fill the lower part of the lungs, pushing the abdomen out and expanding the ribs

### Upcoming Workshops

**Preparing for Birth, Naturally** *Wednesday, March 3, 2010 – Dartmouth Sportsplex – members \$15, non-members \$18*

**Strong Bones: Supporting Healthy Structure** (part of Nourishing Women in Their Journey to Health Series) - *Wednesday, March 10<sup>th</sup> – 12-1pm – Alderney Gate Library*

**How Toxic Are You?: The Basics of Natural Detoxification** *Wednesday, March 10<sup>th</sup> – 7:8:30pm – Dartmouth Sportsplex – members \$15, non members \$18*

**Preparing for Birth, Naturally** (part of Nourishing Women in Their Journey to Health Series) - *Wednesday, March 24<sup>th</sup> – 12-1pm – Alderney Gate Library*

**The Allergy Epidemic: Beyond Pollen and Hayfever** *Wednesday, March 24<sup>th</sup> – 7-8:30pm – Dartmouth Sportsplex - \$15 members, \$18 non-members*

**How Toxic Are You?: The Basics of Natural Detoxification AND Putting Out the Inflammatory Fire** *Saturday, March 27<sup>th</sup> – Nova Scotia Fitness Association Conference – Truro, NS*

5. Hold the breath for 1-5 seconds.
6. Exhale slowly for 5-10 seconds until you have emptied the lungs.
7. Repeat 4-5 times more.

### III. Do's and Don'ts

DO establish a rhythmic rise and fall of your abdomen, to promote regular breathing.

DO attempt to breathe inaudibly after you have gotten the hang of deep breathing.

DO push your abdomen out as you breathe in and full the abdomen in as you breathe out.

DO give an extra snort as you exhale to rid yourself of stale waste-matter in the bottom of the lungs.

DO NOT slump. For maximum efficiency your torso must be as straight as possible

I encourage you to practice breathing healthfully everyday. Make it a habit. Your whole body will thank you and you will continue forward on your journey to health.

~ Dr. Sarah

### Healthy Breathing Resources

Buteyko Canada ([www.buteykocan.com](http://www.buteykocan.com))

Breathing Space Yoga Studio Dartmouth ([www.breathingspaceyogastudio.ca](http://www.breathingspaceyogastudio.ca))

Techniques of Pranayama Workshop – The Yoga Loft, Halifax ([www.theyogaloft.ca](http://www.theyogaloft.ca))

Pranayama: The Art of Yoga Breathing (<http://www.abc-of-yoga.com/pranayama>)

### Lentil Curry

(care of 'Healing with Whole Foods' - Paul Pitchford)

1 cup lentils, soaked

4 cups water

1 Tbsp curry powder or ¼ tsp each coriander, cayenne, ginger, cinnamon and turmeric

¼ tsp sea salt

Cook lentils until soft. Add seasonings and sea salt. Cover and cook 5-10 minutes. Serve over brown rice or quinoa.

Serves 4.

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