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Need to Reduce Stress? Take a deep breath!

Have you ever noticed how taking a deep breath can help you relax? This is because when you breathe deeply you send calming signals to your brain, and, in return, your brain sends those soothing messages throughout your body.

There are many ways to use breathing to assist in stress management. Here are two examples:

1. Be in a comfortable position in an easy chair or lying down. Close your eyes and inhale deeply through your nose. Allow your lungs and abdomen to rise. Slowly exhale through your mouth. Do this for several repetitions.

2. Again, begin in a comfortable position. Breathe in through your nose and count to 7. Hold your breath and count to 7 and exhale through your mouth and count to 7. Do this for several repetitions. If counting to 7 is too long – shorten it to whatever feels comfortable.

Breathing exercises can contribute greatly to your relaxation. Results from several studies show that 10-20 minutes of breathing practice a day can make a significant difference in reducing stress. There are many different types of exercises that can be found on the internet by doing a search for "breathing exercises." Make time for yourself to see if conscious breathing can help you. The more you do it, the better you may feel!

Healthier Lungs for a Healthier Life: Tips to Help You Breathe Easier

The American Lung Association suggests taking these steps to keep your lungs healthy and to reduce your risk of lung disease:

- **Don't Smoke:** Cigarette smoking is the leading cause of lung cancer and pulmonary diseases.

- **Avoid Exposure to Pollutants:** Second-hand smoke, air pollutions and chemicals can cause or worsen lung disease.

- **Prevent Infection:** Wash hands often, avoid crowds during cold and flu season, get your flu vaccine yearly, and practice good oral hygiene.

- **Get a Check-Up:** Regular check-ups help prevent diseases, including lung diseases, which often go undetected until they become more severe.

- **Exercise:** Aerobic exercise helps improve lung capacity and specific breathing exercises, such as those described in the above article, can be great for helping you to relax.

Exercising? Don't Forget to Breathe!

In our daily lives, breathing becomes an involuntary action – one that we ordinarily do not give much thought. One instance when we should pay more attention to how we breathe is during physical activity.

The way we breathe during exercise has an influence on the efficiency and effectiveness of our workouts as well as our endurance. Here are a few tips to consider during your next workout:

1. **Never hold your breath!** This can result in poor posture and inefficient movements.

2. **When lifting weights, always exhale as you move or push the weight**. Inhale as you slowly return to the starting position.

3. **When running, make certain your breaths aren't too quick and shallow.** You won't take in sufficient oxygen for it to be delivered throughout the body if you breathe this way. Sometimes, it helps to breathe in for a count of three and breathe out for a count of two (or whatever feels most comfortable or beneficial for you.)

4. **For quick bursts of activity, it is more natural to have quicker and shorter breathing patterns.** In this instance, this breathing pattern would be ok because you will have more time between activity/movements to recover.

Respiratory Health & Safety in the Workplace

According to Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) statistics, respiratory protection was among the top 10 most frequently cited OSHA standards violated in FY2016. The importance of wearing a respirator is to protect workers against dangerous contaminants such as harmful dusts, fogs, smoke, mists, gases, vapors, and sprays, when engineered controls aren't sufficient to remove the harmful particulates. When employees are exposed to these types of hazards, they are at increased risk for cancer, lung impairment, or even death.

So, what can an employer do to protect their employees when engineered controls aren't sufficient in the workplace? Implement a respiratory protection program. According to the OSHA Respiratory Protection Standard, 1910.134 (c)(1), any workplace where respirators are necessary to protect the health of the employee — or whenever respirators are required by the employer — the employer shall establish and implement a written respiratory protection program with worksite-specific procedures.

Reference Source: OSHA.gov

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disorder (COPD):   Am I at Risk?

COPD is a chronic lung disorder resulting in blocked air flow in the lungs, and is the fourth leading cause of death in the United States. "COPD affects 20 million Americans, with only half of them being diagnosed," says Joseph Thorpe MD, a pulmonologist with TriHealth Pulmonary Medicine.

COPD is the result of a combination of emphysema, chronic bronchitis and asthma, with smoking being the leading cause of COPD deaths, accounting for approximately 90 percent. Other causes include: long-term exposure to secondhand smoke, air pollution and repeated respiratory infections. A small percentage of the population is predisposed to developing COPD due to alpha-1 antitrypsin deficiency, an inherited condition resulting in low levels or no protein in the blood.

To best protect yourself from COPD, avoid tobacco products and reduce your exposure to environments where secondhand smoke, fumes and strong odors are present. By maintaining a healthy, active lifestyle, you will promote good lung health and reduce your risks of COPD development.