



# Prāṇāyāma

Present Moment Wonderful Moment

By Thich Nhat Hanh

*Breathing in, I calm my body.*

*Breathing out, I smile.*

*Dwelling in the present moment,*

*I know this is a wonderful moment.*

**“Full body breathing is an extraordinary symphony of both powerful and subtle movements that massage our internal organs, oscillate our joints, and alternately tone and release all the muscles in the body. It is a full participation with life.”**

***Donna Farhi, The Breathing Book***

With Gratitude and Appreciation:

Donna Farhi, Doug Keller, Leslie Kaminoff, David Keil, Mark Stephens, David Gorman, Gay Hendricks, PHD, B.K.S. Iyengar, Thich Nhat Hanh, Richard Rosen, Bruce Bowditch, Swami Saradananda, Blandine Calais-Germain, Gregor Maehle, Swami Rama, Andrew Biel, TKV Desikachar, ancient yogic texts, more recent yogic texts and to all of my past and current teachers.

- The Breath
- Anatomy
- Mechanics
- Prana
- Prāṇāyāma
- Poses
- Techniques
- Other



*Without full awareness of breathing, there can be no development of meditative stability and understanding--Thich Nhat Hanh*

.....**OF BREATHING**

- Necessary for life
- Oxygen supplier
- Death @ 3 minutes without oxygen
- Breath intimately tied to life force/energy
- Humans breathe about 12-20/minute
- Intimately linked to human experience
- Breath and consciousness linked

## **THE BREATH IS**

Air

Respiratory System

Part of autonomic nervous system  
But able to be controlled/regulated

Shape Change

Conscious Breathing for physical, mental, and spiritual wellbeing

## **From The Hatha Yoga Pradipika:**

- After mastering asanas, the yogi-possessing self-control and eating a suitable, moderate diet-should practice Prāṇāyāma as taught by his guru
- When the breath is unsteady, the mind is unsteady. When the breath is steady, the mind is steady, and the yogi becomes steady. Therefore one should restrain the breath
- Correct Prāṇāyāma will weaken all diseases. Improper practice of Yoga will strengthen all diseases.

- Prāṇāyāma is the connecting link between the body and the soul of man, and the hub in the wheel of Yoga. -*B.K.S. Iyengar*
- The practice of Prāṇāyāma develops a steady mind, strong will-power and sound judgment. -*B.K.S. Iyengar*
- Yoga Sutra II.49 Prāṇāyāma is the regulation of the incoming and outgoing flow of breath with retention. It is to be practised only after perfection in asana is attained.
- Yoga Sutra II.50 Prāṇāyāma has three movements: prolonged and fine inhalation, exhalation and retention; all regulated with precision according to duration and place. -*B.K.S. Iyengar*

**ANATOMY**

# The Diaphragm

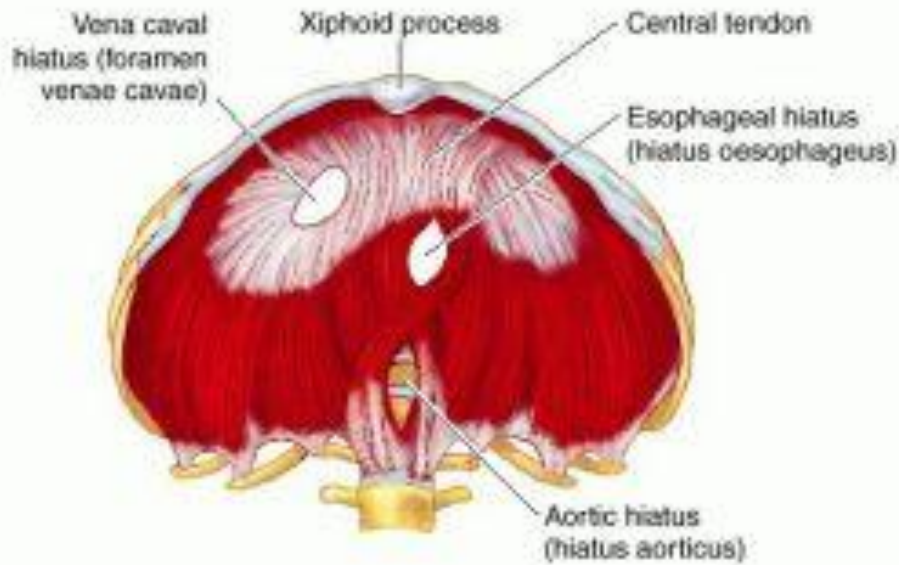
Thin but strong asymmetrical dome/parachute/umbrella shaped muscular membrane that separates the abdominal and thoracic cavities and when functioning correctly – promotes most efficient breathing

Muscle fibers attach to the inner surface of the ribs (7-12), the xiphoid process, and the lumbar vertebrae (1-4) and converge at a central tendon

Has holes/openings for the esophagus (connects pharynx & stomach), the aorta (major artery transports oxygenated blood away from heart), and the vena cava (largest vein returns blood to the heart)



# The Diaphragm: Main Muscle of Breathing



# External & Internal Intercostals

Small, slender muscles located between the ribs are two groups – external & internal – with fibers perpendicular to each other and considered extensions of the external & internal obliques

**External intercostals** draw the ventral part of the ribs upward, thus increasing the space of the thoracic cavity

**Internal intercostals** draw the ventral part of the ribs downward, thus decreasing the space of the thoracic cavity

**INSPIRATORY  
MUSCLES**

**EXPIRATORY  
MUSCLES**

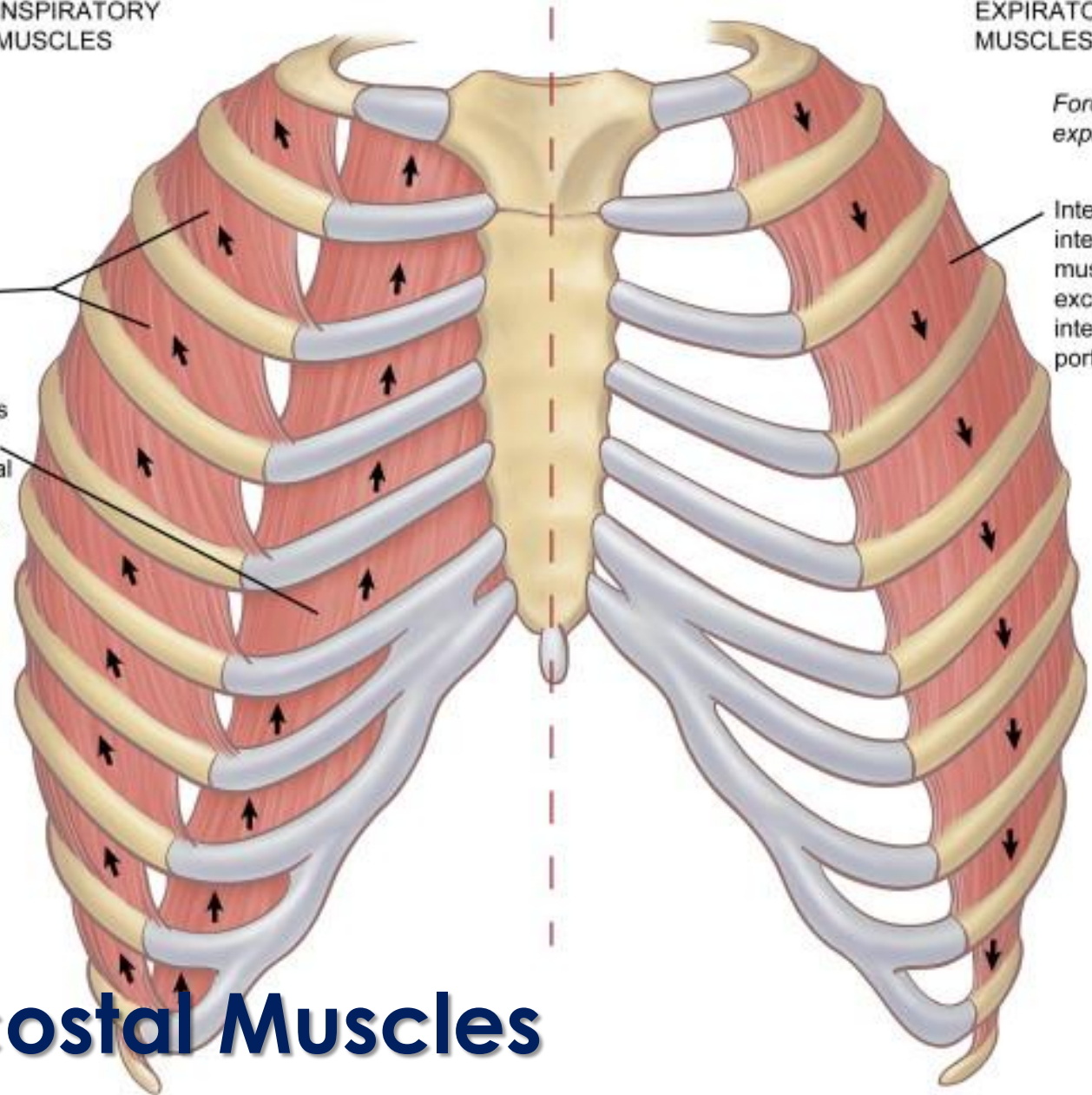
*Main*

External  
intercostal  
muscles  
•Elevate the  
ribs enlarging  
the rib cage

Intercartilagenous  
portions of the  
internal intercostal  
muscles  
•Elevate the ribs

*Forced  
expiration*

Internal  
intercostal  
muscles,  
except for their  
intercartilagenous  
portions

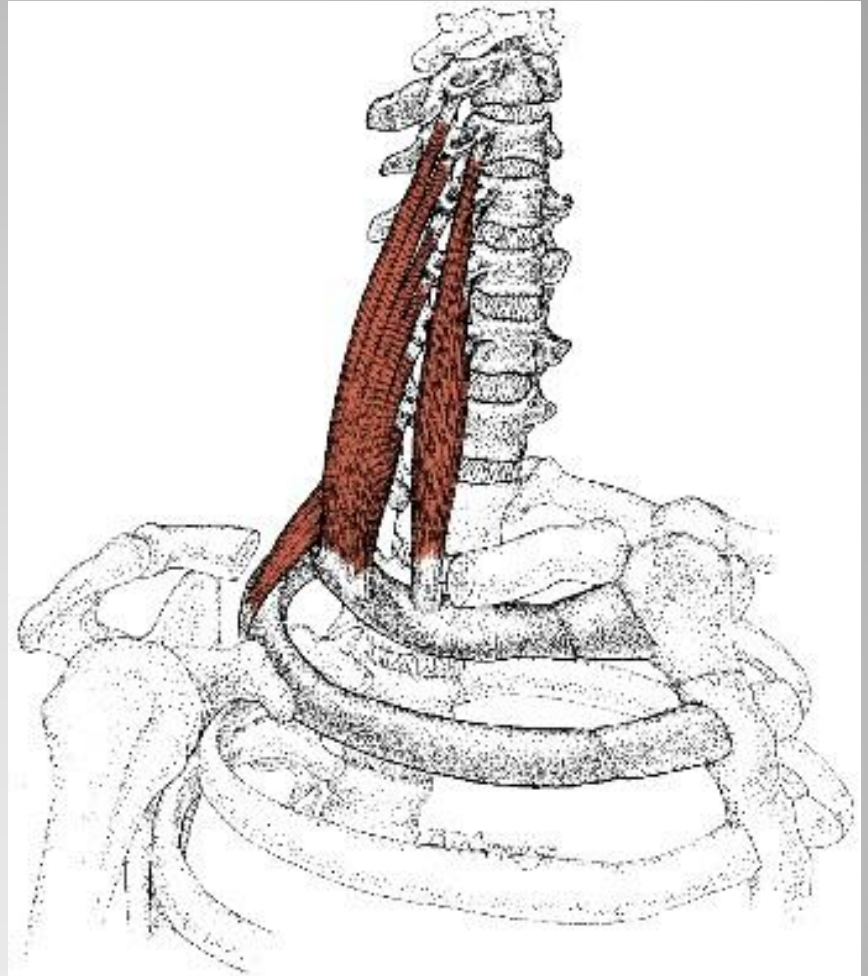


# Intercostal Muscles

## Anterior, Middle, & Posterior Scalene Muscles

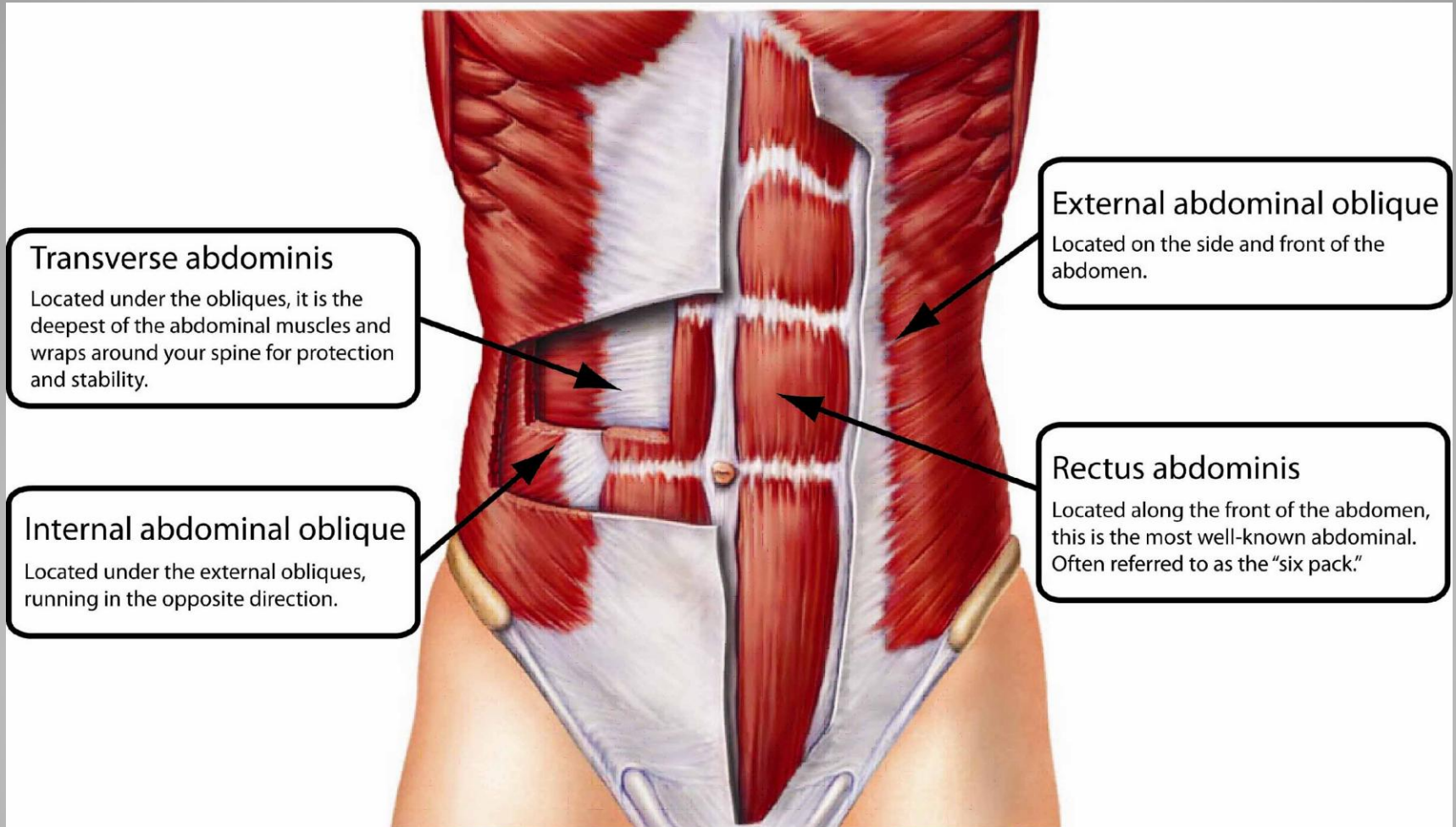
Originally thought to be an accessory muscle, in that they appeared only to be used in labored or forced breathing. May play larger role in that they are active even during quiet normal breathing

Work to elevate and fix the first and second ribs, while serving to fix them during quiet breathing



**Scalenes**





### Transverse abdominis

Located under the obliques, it is the deepest of the abdominal muscles and wraps around your spine for protection and stability.

### Internal abdominal oblique

Located under the external obliques, running in the opposite direction.

### External abdominal oblique

Located on the side and front of the abdomen.

### Rectus abdominis

Located along the front of the abdomen, this is the most well-known abdominal. Often referred to as the "six pack."

# Transverse Abdominus

Deepest of the abdominal group \*Plays a major role in forced exhalation

- sternocleidomastoid (elevated sternum)
- serratus anterior
- pectoralis major & minor
- upper trapezius
- latissimus dorsi
- erector spinae (thoracic)
- iliocostalis lumborum
- quadratus lumborum
- serratus posterior superior and inferior
- subclavius

## **Other Accessory Muscles of Breathing**

## Muscles of inspiration

### Accessory

Sternocleidomastoid  
(elevates sternum)

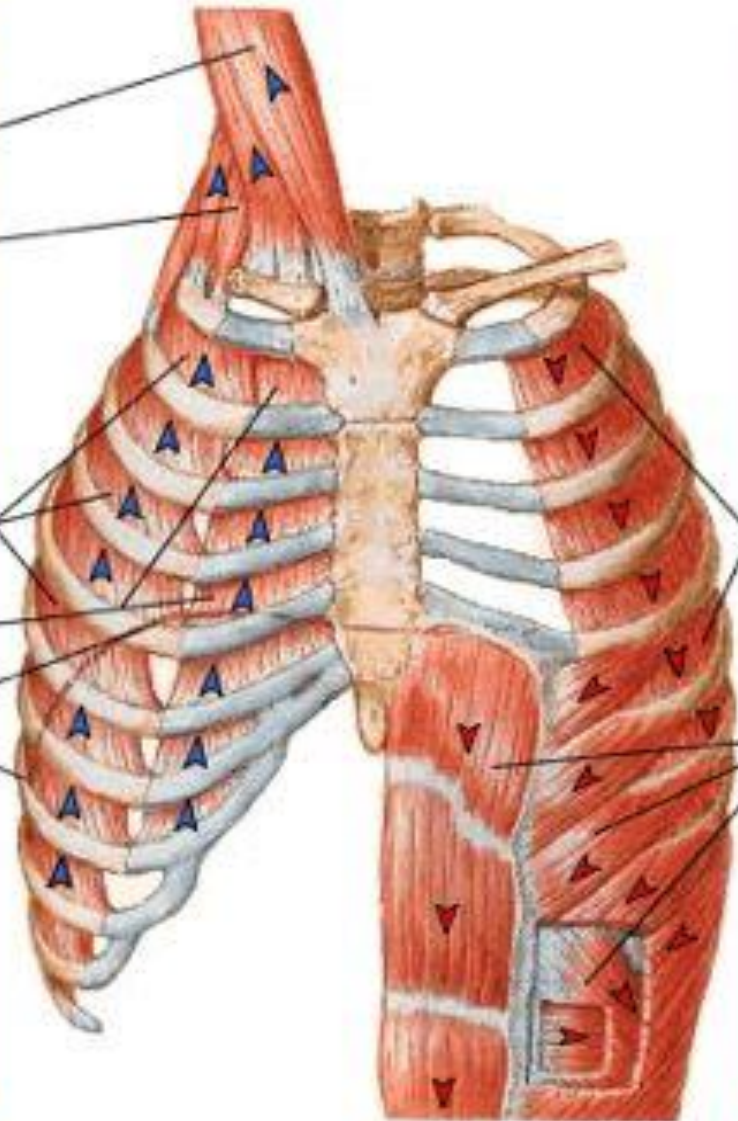
Scalenes Group  
(elevate upper ribs)

Not shown:  
Pectoralis minor

### Principal

External intercostals  
Interchondral part of  
internal intercostals  
(also elevates ribs)

Diaphragm  
(dome descends, thus  
increasing vertical  
dimension of thoracic  
cavity; also elevates  
lower ribs)



## Muscles of expiration

### Quiet breathing

Expiration results from  
passive, elastic recoil  
of the lungs, rib cage  
and diaphragm

### Active breathing

Internal intercostals,  
except interchondral  
part (pull ribs down)

Abdominals  
(pull ribs down,  
compress abdominal  
contents thus pushing  
diaphragm up)

Note shown:  
Quadratus lumborum  
(pulls ribs down)

# MECHANICS

The Respiratory System

Shape and Volume Change of Torso

Ribs create “Bucket Handle Effect”

**A typical rib might be compared to a bucket handle, attached at one end to the sternum (breastbone) and at the other end to the vertebral column.**



- **Respiration.** Respiration is the exchange of gases between the atmosphere and the cells of the body.

It is a physiological process. There are two types of respiration-- external and internal.

External respiration is the exchange of gases between the air in the lungs and blood.

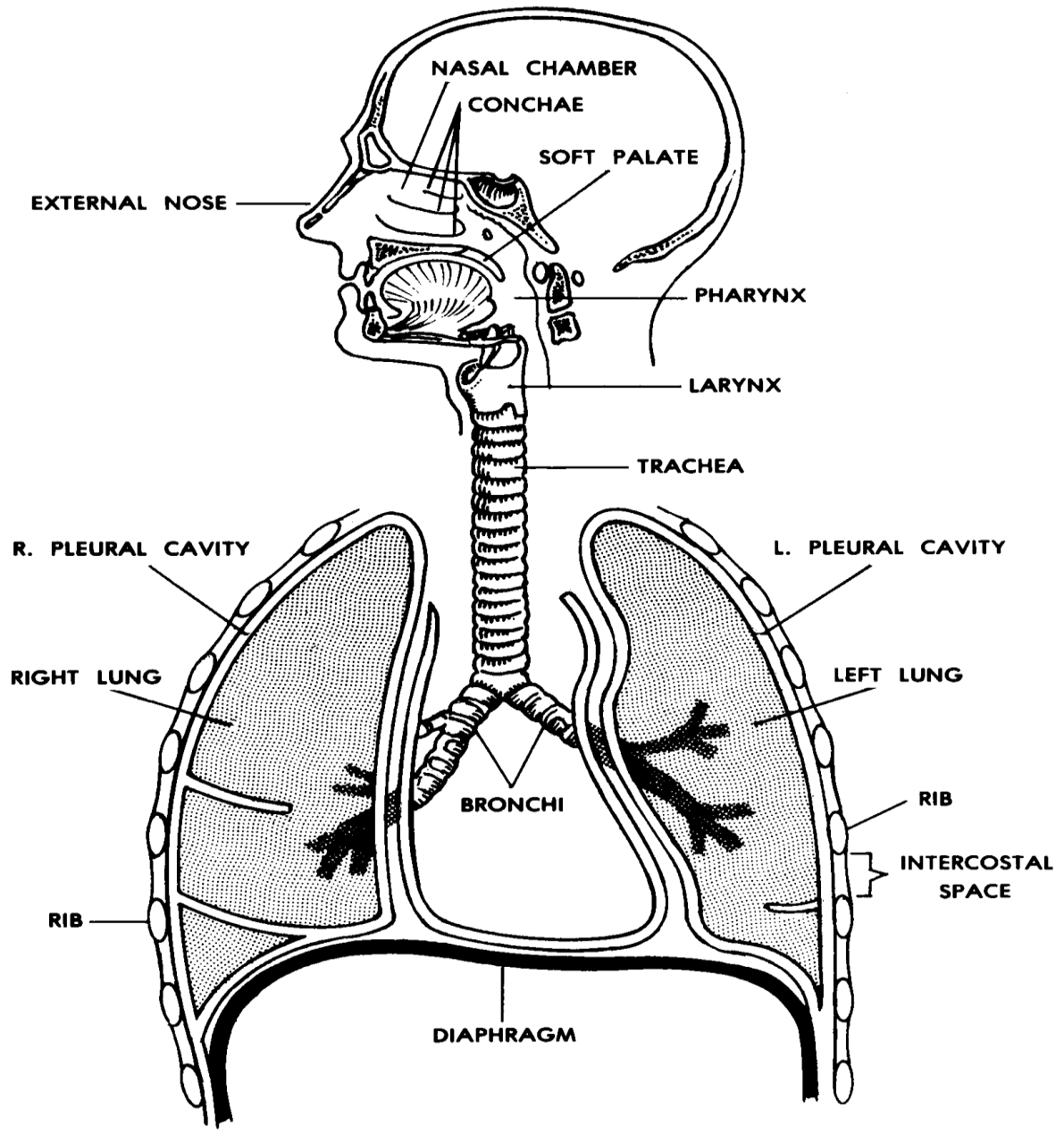
Internal respiration is the exchange of gases between the blood and the individual cells of the body.

- **Breathing.** Breathing is the process that moves air into and out of the lungs.

It is a mechanical process. There are two types of breathing in humans— costal (thoracic) and diaphragmatic (abdominal).

In costal breathing, the major structure causing the movement of the air is the rib cage.

In diaphragmatic breathing, interaction between the diaphragm and the abdominal wall causes the air to move into and out of the lungs.



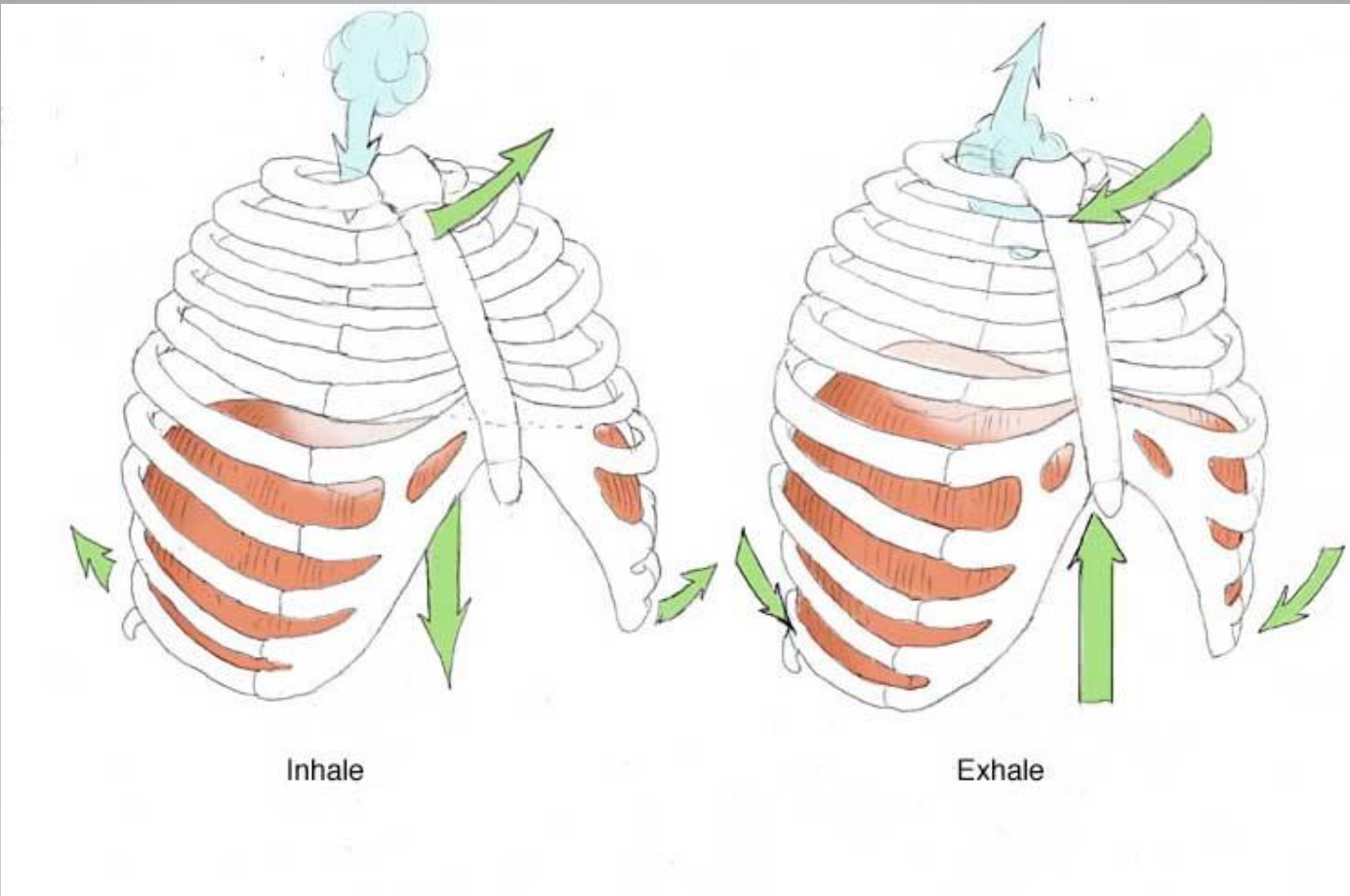
# TWO PRINCIPLE TYPES OF BREATHING

COSTAL BREATHING

DIAPHRAGMATIC BREATHING

And in one simple statement:  
“Breathing is Shape Change”

Leslie Kaminoff



Inhale

Exhale

**Costal Breathing works the ribs in the thoracic cavity:**

**Changes shape and volume example: bellows, accordion**

**Diaphragmatic Breathing works the abdominal cavity:**

**Changes shape, but not volume example: water balloon**

**\*Leslie Kaminoff\***

- On the inhalation, muscles attached to the thoracic cage raise the rib cage. The "bucket handle" ribs are lifted by the overall movement upward and outward of the rib cage. These movements increase the thoracic diameters from right to left and from front to back. Thus, the intra-thoracic volume increases. Boyle's law, states that the increase in volume leads to a decrease in pressure. The air pressure outside the body then forces air into the lungs and inflates them.

- On the exhalation The rib cage movements and pressure relationships are reversed for exhalation. Thus, intra-thoracic volume decreases. The intra-thoracic pressure increases and forces air outside the body.

## **Costal/Thoracic Breathing**

- On the inhalation the diaphragm contracts, the dome flattens and main central tendon is pulled down causing the diaphragm to descend.
- This increases the depth (vertical diameter) of the thoracic cavity and thus increases its volume. This decreases air pressure within the thoracic cavity.
- The greater air pressure outside the body then forces/ draws air into the lungs.
- On the exhalation, the diaphragm relaxes and returns to the dome shape by the elastic abdominal wall forcing the diaphragm back up with the pushing of the watery tissues of the abdomen against the underside of the relaxed diaphragm.
- With the dome shape extended upwards causes air to exit the lungs and the process of inhalation is reversed.

## **DIAPHRAGMATIC BREATHING**

# PRANA

Prana is the energy permeating the universe at all levels. It is the vibrating energies, the physical energies, the hidden or potential energies, and the energy of creating, protecting, and destroying.

Upanishads: Prana is the principle of life and consciousness.

pra=first; Na=smallest unit of energy

Prana= cosmic prana vs Prana= breath force

Breath is the manifestation of the force of prana

**Usually associated as synonym with breath – but misunderstood – Prana much more than breath –**

- There are 5 pranas: currents/flows of the breath
- Vayus – (winds) major currents/flows of the bodies vital energies
- 1. Prana Vayu
- 2. Apana Vayu
- 3. Samana Vayu
- 4. Udana Vayu
- 5. Vyana Vayu
- Most Significant:
- **Prana-vayu:** upward moving, invigorating, the inhalation, and corresponds to chest region & ida nadi
- **Apana-vayu:** downward moving, the exhalation, and corresponds to abs and lower body functions, grounding & pingala nadi

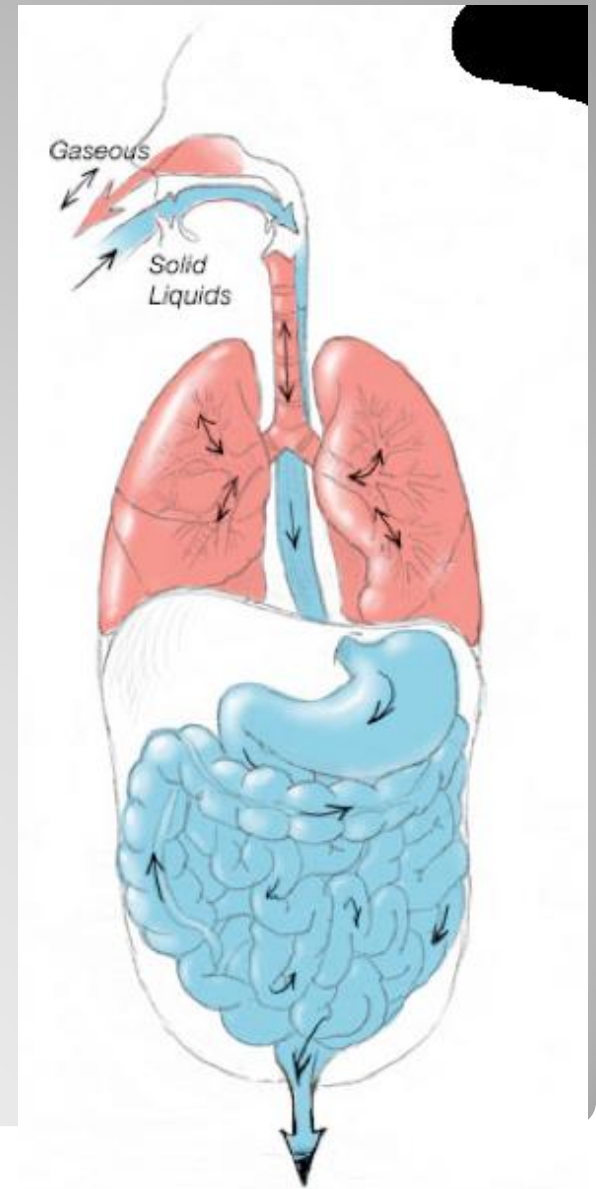
## Pranic Body –Pranamaya Kosha



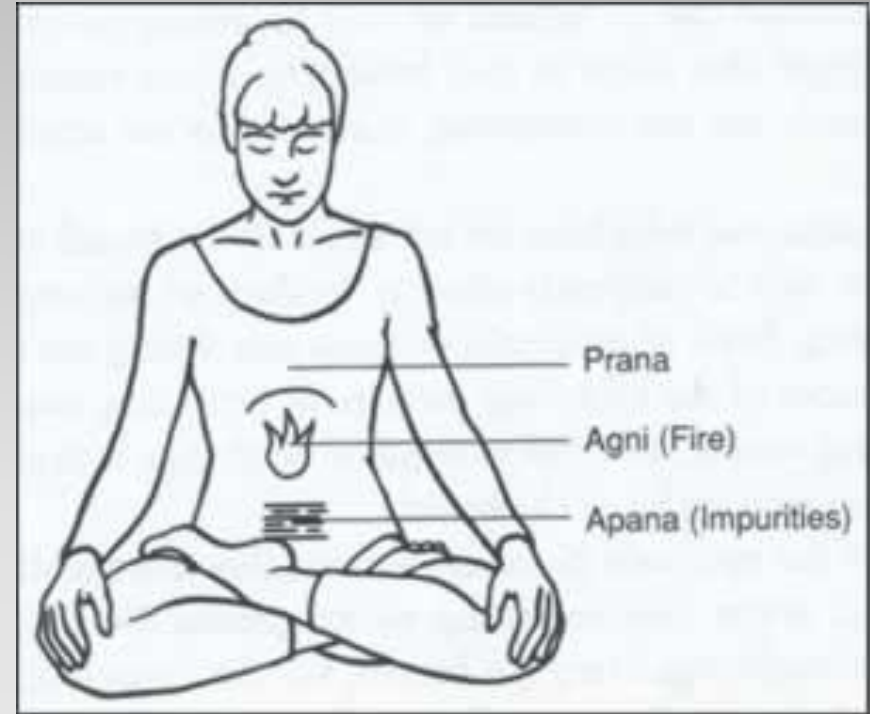
- **Samana Vayu** – assimilation – between heart and naval- a circular flow of breath around the waist and associated with digestion
- **Udana Vayu** – part of exhalation– above the neck -a circular flow of breath in the neck and head- concentrated in the throat and associated with speech, all sensory receptors, & erect posture
- **Vyana Vayu** – through entire body – the breath that extends out to the limbs of the body – control of all movement and coordinating other pranas

## The Other 3 Vayus

- **Actions of Prana and Apana:**
- **Prana:** “pra:” before, first, in front - “anu:” unit, living, human
- *The force and substance of nourishment*
- Nourishment enters at top of system and moves down
- **Apana:** “apa:” away, off, down
- *The force and substance of elimination*
- Solid, liquid waste exit from the bottom of the body
- Gaseous waste exits from the top of the body
- Apana must be able to move freely in both directions
- Pranic force of exhalation is outward and grounding force

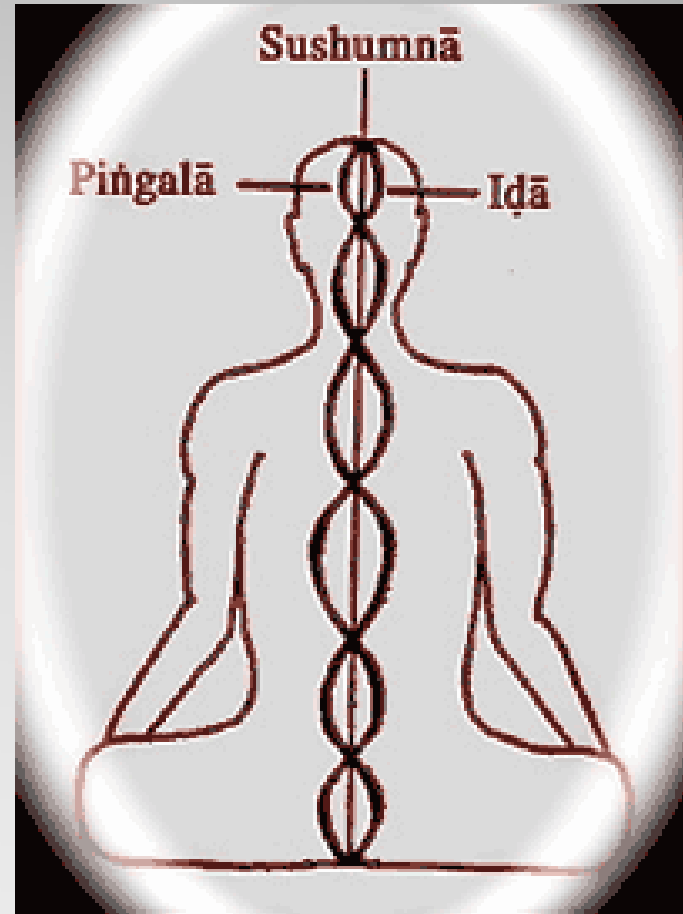


- A yogic model of the breathing body –
- Bring Prana & Apana into balance-join
- Prana-Inhale-Nourish
- Apana-Exhale-Waste
- In-breath offered out-breath
- Transmutation in the Fire
- 3 main bandhas aid



**Prāṇāyāma is the meeting of Prana and Apana (Leslie Kaminoff)**

- Prana flows in rivers, currents or channels called Nadis
  - Main central channel –**Sushumna** –from root chakra to crown chakra
  - Other main Nadis
- **1. Ida** –left, feminine energy, moon, rising vital breath, cool
  - **2. Pingala** –right, masculine, sun, descending breath, heat



- Central channel – the main thoroughfare for the subtle energetic body

Visualize as a column of light roughly corresponding to the vertebral column

Dharna 12 of Vijnana Bhairava Tantra, gives specific visualization of a central channel the size of a lotus stem (thickness of a pencil) and to meditate on the emptiness within this middle channel

Try to feel the rhythm of your breath and imagine the energy of that breath moving up and down inside the channel. Alternatively, envision the channel filled with ethereal light.

**Sushumna**

According to TKV Desikachar, “kundalini is the obstacle(s) in the spine that obstructs the movement of prana into sushumna”

There is a sense of rising that brings a new perspective on reality. Without rising, we are “asleep” in our innermost self.

Per Doug Keller “ Kundalini in you, as you, for you.”



**Kundalini –your innermost self**

# Prāṇāyāma

## Prāṇāyāma – DIFFERENT INTERPRETATIONS

breath practice, breath attention, breath mastery, breathing exercises, breath control, bandhas, purify nadis, for purification, fourth limb of yoga, to lead to meditation, activate prana, control of prana, expansion of consciousness

- Prana =breath, respiration, life force, vitality, chi/ki  
Yama =control or restrain
- PRA – forth, away  
AN – to breathe, to respire, to live, to move  
AYAMA – stretching, extending, restraining
- **Prāṇāyāma = prana + ayama**
- **Ayama =non-control – extension – expansion**

**\*\*Prāṇāyāma = expansion of awareness of consciousness and realization of Self\*\***



- The fourth limb of the eightfold path of yoga
- *The extension and restraint of the breathing forth*
- *Breath is Shape Change*
- *Unobstructing the prana is accomplished through a balanced joining of the forces of inhale and exhale.*
- *Breath is the integrating principle of posture, movement, and yoga practice.*

## **Prāṇāyāma View –Leslie Kaminoff**

- Because we are dealing with the breath, practicing Prāṇāyāma can cause dizziness, hiccups, light-headedness, chest pain, hyperventilation, itching, tingling, heat or cold, feelings of lightness or heaviness, extreme emotions, or even loss of consciousness.

**It is extremely important to practice Prāṇāyāma with caution.**

- Find a comfortable & supported body posture
- Relax body
- Teach slow, carefully, & mindfully
- Exercise moderation, gentleness & patience
- Pay attention & find ease (sukha)
- Observe natural breath before moving on
- Do not force the breath – Avoid Strain
- Give permission to return to Natural Breath
- Breath through the nose (some exceptions)

**!!! CAUTIONS !!!**

**!!! CAUTIONS !!!**

- Consider: **Time of Practice** (early morning ideal), **Place of Practice** (quiet, clean, pleasant room ideal with no drafts), and **Sitting Position** (Seated posture with spine, neck, & head erect ideal)
- Consider: **Sequence** (after asana and before mediation), **Clothes** (comfortable), **Bathing** (clean body), **Empty Stomach** (3-4 hours after food), **Digestion, Diet** (balanced)
- *As listed in: Asana Pranayama Mudra Bandha*  
*-Swami Satyananda Saraswati*

## **Tips for Practice – Surroundings & Body**

**1. INHALATION – Pooraka/Puraka “filling”**

**2. KUMBHAKA – Retention after inhale**

**2. EXHALATION – Rechaka “emptying”**

**3. KUMBHAKA – Retention after exhale**

The four parts to each breath can be practiced in different ratios

## **Parts of the Breath**

- **KUMBHAKA**

(full pot/empty pot-symbolizing the body full or empty of breath)

- Consciously bringing in/extending the pause
- Retention/suspension of breath that brings a stilling of the prana

- Antara/Antah Kumbhaka – breath is paused and held in at the top of the inhale

- Bahir/Bahya/Bayha Kumbhaka – breath is paused and held out at the bottom of the exhale

## **Kumbhaka –Part of the Breath**

- **BRAHMANA** – expansion – Longer inhalation than exhalation – focus on chest – energizes  
Ratio breathing = I6:H2:E 4:H1
- **LANGHANA**– starving – Longer exhalation than inhalation – focus on abdomen – relaxes  
Ratio breathing = I4:H1:E 6:H2
- **SAMANA** – balanced – Inhalation and exhalation are the same length – even state of mind  
Ratio breathing = I6:H2:E 6:H2
- Ratio Breathing = Vritti Prāṇāyāma (vritti here indicates a course of action)
- Equal ratio-sama-vritti & unequal ratio-vishama-vritti

**Prāṇāyāma Practice Categorized As.....**

- A multi-dimensional you
  - Mapping to Subtle Centers
- Place where breath pauses is dvādashānta
- 3 Main dvādashāntas to visualize
- **Inner** = heart = 12 finger breadths from tip of nose to inside, where inhalation turns around near the heart
- **Outer** = in front = 12 finger breadths from the tip of the nose outward where exhalation turns around to become inhalation
- **Upper** = crown chakra = 12 finger breadths upward from crown of head
- Anyone of these are good for focus of pranayama and meditation. Experience moment of meditation – calmness, joy, steadiness of mind

**Dvādashānta – “the end of twelve”**

- **Natural Breathing**

- Paying attention
- Observe
- Relationship between breath and movement
- Flow
- Pacing
- Length
- Counting
- Parts of breath
- Witness to
- Not controlling

- **Conscious Breathing**
- **Abdominal Belly -Diaphragmatic**
- **Three part – Complete Dirga or Deergha**
- **Simple Ratio Breathing**
- **Simple Ujjayi**

**Prāṇāyāma for Level 1**



- All of previously listed
- **Ujjayi**
- **Viloma** –interruptions –"against the grain"  
 \**Viloma I* –pauses inhalation  
 \**Viloma II* –pauses exhalation
- **Nadi Shodhana** – alternate nostril
- **Simhasana** -Lion's Breath
- **Brehmari /Bhramari**– hum/bee
- **Shitali** – cooling
- **Sitkari** – hissing
- **Bhastrika** – bellows
- **Kapalabhati** –skull shining (actually a Kriya)

## Prāṇāyāma for Level 2+

# POSES

Postures for Prāṇāyāma - Easy and stable posture

Choose a posture/position in which the body does not disturb the mind and the breath, choosing props and support to assist

**Prop Options** : yoga mat, blankets, bolsters, blocks, yogic straps, wall, sandbag, chair, eye bag/pillow, fabric elastic bandage, and timer

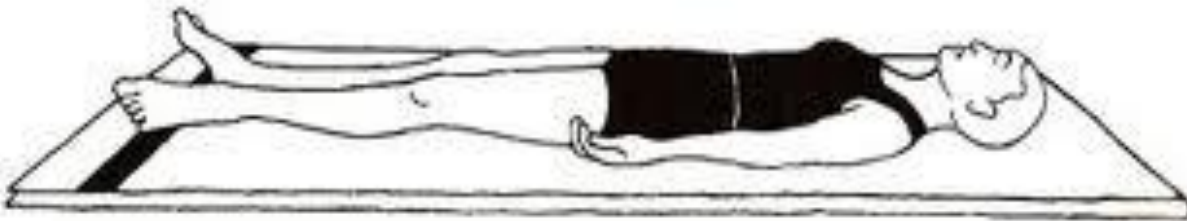


**BLANKET  
OPTION  
FOR HEAD  
OR UNDER  
THE LEGS**

**Gentle &  
Level 1+**



**ALSO CHAIR  
OPTION  
FOR LEGS OR  
TO SIT ON**



## SANDBAG BREATHING



## UPRIGHT SEATED WITH OR WITHOUT WALL SUPPORT

Recommended: block or blanket(s) support under pelvis



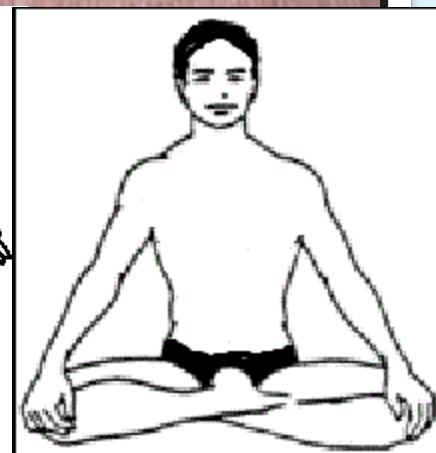
Padmasana



Sukhasana



Svastikasana



Siddhasana

## BLANKET SUPPORT

Inclined or Bolster

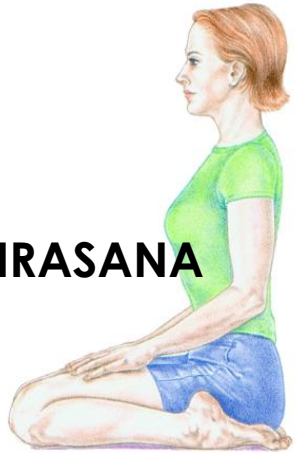


Level 2+



**VAJRASANA**

**VIRASANA**



**ON BELLY:  
Makarsana/crocodile**



# OTHER BREATH POSES



**RESTORATIVE**



**SUPTA  
BADDHA  
KONASANA**



**SITTING ON A CHAIR  
Maitri Asana**



**BIKRAM**

# **TECHNIQUES**

**Ways to “Shape Change”**



# Observation of the Natural Breath

Full, healthy, free, relaxing, and uninhibited breath  
that comes with birth.

Paying attention to the patterns, rhythms, limitations of our  
breathing; which we have developed over our lifetime, can  
bring us back in touch with our natural breath.

This is the place to begin with and return to, again and  
again and again, to reconnect with the natural breath.

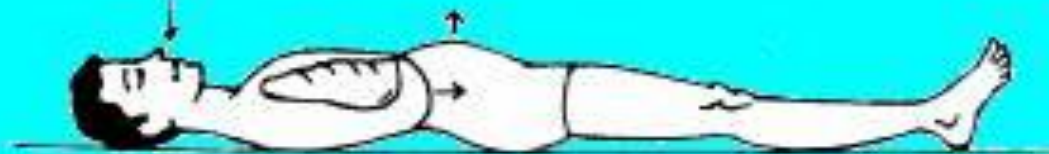


- Observe natural and spontaneous breathing
- Witness – Casual observer of the Breath
- Notice attempt to change/modify
- DO NOT CONTROL
- Coolness inhale – Warmth exhale
- Where does breath move? Different Areas?
- Feel breath in nostrils, throat, chest, ribcage, belly?
- Does breath make ribs move up, out, both?
- Quick or Slow?
- Length of Inhalation? Exhalation?
- Shallow or Deep?
- Pauses? Where? How Long?
- Uneven? Catches? Fluctuations? Erratic?
- Observe without interference or judgment
- Breathing normally with full attention on whole breathing process

## **Observation of the Natural Breath**

- Enhance action of diaphragm and minimize thoracic/ ribcage movement
- Relax body -especially abdomen
- Observe Natural Breath
- Invite breath to abdomen/belly – rest hands lightly on either side of navel
- Feel movement of abdomen with breath
- Inhale, diaphragm moves downward toward navel and presses on & massages internal organs
- Exhale, diaphragm moves upward and internal organs release
- Internal massaging action with each breath
- Movement of diaphragm signifies that lower lobes of lungs being utilized – where best oxygen exchange
- Calms the mind and nervous system
- *Note: diaphragmatic breathing involves expansion and contraction of the abdomen as well as expansion and contraction of the lower side ribs*

## **ABDOMINAL –DIAPHRAGMATIC- BELLY**



**Abdominal breathing**



**Thoracic or chest breathing**

**ABDOMINAL –DIAPHRAGMATIC- BELLY**

- *Dirga Prāṇāyāma* The 3 part breath or complete breath is nourishing, calming and relaxing. Wave of breath from belly toward middle/lower ribs toward upper chest and then back down again. Initially may be more segmented/sectioned. Whole circumference of the lungs becomes elastic and responds with breath movement
- *Dirga Prāṇāyāma* is called the three part breath because you are actively breathing into three parts of your abdomen. The first position is the low belly (on top of or just below the belly button), the second position is the low chest (lower half of the rib cage), and the third position is the low throat (just above the top of the sternum). The breath is continuous, inhaled and exhaled through the nose.
- The inhalation starts in the first position, the low belly; then moves to the second position, the low chest; then to the third position, the low throat. The exhalation starts in the low throat, moves to the low chest, and finishes in the low belly.

## **3-PART – COMPLETE -YOGIC – DIRGA/Deergha**



Rest your hands on the individual positions to feel the breath rising and falling through each position. When you start practicing, you may want to individually isolate the movement in each position, using the hands. When you have a good feel for the breath moving in and out of each position, practice without the hands. Eventually relax the effort of the Prāṇāyāma and breathe into the three positions gently, feeling a wave-like flow of breath move up and down the torso.

## **3-PART – COMPLETE -YOGIC BREATHING– DIRGA/Deergha**

- **Breathing into 8 parts of the body**, which helps to breathe in all the parts of the torso. Begin in a supported lying down or seated position with the back straight.
- **Awareness at the front of torso: Breathe into the front upper right part of the torso, then front lower right part, front lower left part, front upper left part. Awareness shifts to back of torso: Breath into the back upper left part, back lower left part, back lower right part and back upper right part.**

## **Breathing into 8 Parts of the Torso**

# Ujjayi

Sanskrit prefix “ud” and root “ji”  
to conquer, conquering, winning, triumph,  
being victorious, victory over

Victorious Conquers Breath

Ocean Breath

Victoriously UpRising

Triumphantly Expanding

Victory from Expansion

Purpose: To attune awareness to each breath through  
regulating the glottis



- Begin with observation of natural breath, transition into Dirga Breath before Ujjayi
- Ujjayi differs from Dirga in that there is belly tone and ribs expand more upward and outward, and glottis is restricted
- Two main characteristics: action in the throat producing distinctive sound and attempt to maintain evenness of flow of the breath
- There is a narrowing of the throat – half closing the epiglottis to give sound to breath, that moves the breath toward the back throat and nasal cavity. Sound is not very loud
- Simple Ujjayi for Beginners: inhale through the nose and breathe out through the mouth with “hhhaaaa” sound as if fogging a mirror
- Level 2 can be encouraged to bring the breath to the back body, encourage pauses, and/or ratios of inhale to exhale
- Ideally used in asana and brings awareness to each breath as to quality and texture

## **UJJAYI –**

- **VILOMA I**
- **Interrupted Inhalation (antara kumbhaka)**

- *Contraindicated for hypertension, heart ailments & anxiety*
- Find natural breath & move toward complete breath
- Full smooth exhalation, inhale slightly, pause, relax, inhale again slightly, pause, inhale in rest of breath, pause and then do a slow smooth exhalation

- **VILOMA II**
- **Interrupted Exhalation (bayha kumbhaka)**
- *Contraindicated for fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue, depression, or low blood pressure*
- Find natural breath & move toward complete breath
- Full smooth inhalation, exhale slightly, pause, relax, exhale again slightly, pause, exhale out rest of breath, pause, and bring in slow smooth inhalation

## **VILOMA-Against the Grain Breath**

# **Specific Techniques For Clearing / Energizing / Heating**

- **Kapalabhati:**
- Skull shining (Kapala=skull & Bhati=to shine)
- Not as rapid as Bhastrika
- Short forceful puff/contraction of exhalation with upper abdominals & diaphragm and passive slow full diaphragmatic inhalation

- **Bhastrika:**
- Bellows breath
- Action like fire bellows with concerted sides to allow it to expand and contract
- Energizing
- Vigorous
- Quick paced
- No pause before inhalation
- Short strong inhale & exhale

## **Kapalabhati**

## **Bhastrika**

**Limit area of movement to the area of the diaphragm**

# **Specific Techniques For Soothing / Relaxing / Cooling**

- **Shitali/Sitali/Sheetali**

Tongue hissing/cool sensations, air is drawn in through curled slightly protruding “straw” tongue tube, (mouth inhalation) .  
Exhale nostrils

- **Sitkari/Seetkari** –

Cooling, air is drawn in through lightly parted lips and teeth. Exhale nostrils

- **Bhramari** – Bee humming, inhale full complete breath and exhale with gentle humming



**Sitali Tongue**

- **Slow breathing Prāṇāyāma** techniques such as Bhramari, Shitali, Sitkari or Nadi Shodhana relatively pose **less risk** as long as practitioner employs **steady attention, patience and discipline**.
- Kapalabhati and Bhastrika, being rapid breathing techniques, pose greater risk. They can accentuate preexisting structural or functional problems or cause excessive strain on the respiratory system. [Vijai Sharma, PhD](#)



# **Subtle Regulating Techniques of the Nadis**

- Place the thumb and third finger on the narrowest part of the nose, where the cartilage begins. Apply the thumb and finger to gently rest on slight indentations of nostrils. To close off one side, apply gentle pressure.
- If the right arm tires, the practice can end or the left hand or bolster can support the right elbow



*Visnu Mudra / Mrgi Mudra  
(Doe Seal) – Right hand position*

## **Alternate Nostril Breathing**

- **Chandra Bhedana**

- Moon breath, mentally soothing, taps into cooling energy of Ida nadi
- Inhale in through the left nostril and out through the right (blocking off alternate nostril)

- **Surya Bhedana**

- Sun breath, mentally stimulating, taps into energizing energy of Pingala nadi
- Inhale in through the right nostril and out through the left (blocking off alternate nostril)

**Ujjayi Foundation - Alternate Nostril**

- Means of purifying the nadis (clearing & equalizing Ida & Pingala) and not considered formal Prāṇāyāma
- The hand is used to regulate the nostril breath by the pressing of thumb tip and ring fingertip alternately to the sides of the nostrils
- Beginning practice, inhale through both nostrils, exhale alternately through one nostril
- Full practice
  - Right nostril blocked-inhale left
  - Left nostril blocked-exhale right
  - Left nostril blocked-inhale right
  - Right nostril blocked-exhale left

**Nadi Shodhana/Nadi Shuddhi/Nadi Sodhana**

- **AJAPA MANTRA** :Meditation – silent natural mantra /natural sound of the breath
- **Soham** (aka So Ham, So hum or Sohum): Inhale – Sooooo /Exhale – Hummmmm translates to “I AM THAT”
- **Hamsa**: Inhale – Hummmmm]/Exhale – Saaaa translates to “THAT I AM”
- Close your eyes and notice the way your energy state is altered while you inhale and exhale. Experiment with hearing "ham" on the inhalation and "sa" on the exhalation. Does this feel energizing or calming for you? Next reverse it: hear "so" on the inhalation and "ham" on the exhalation. Does this change the energetic feelings?
- B.K.S. Iyengar says they are actually combined; every creature creates so'ham on the inhalation (which means "He am I") and hamsa on the exhalation (which means "I am He").

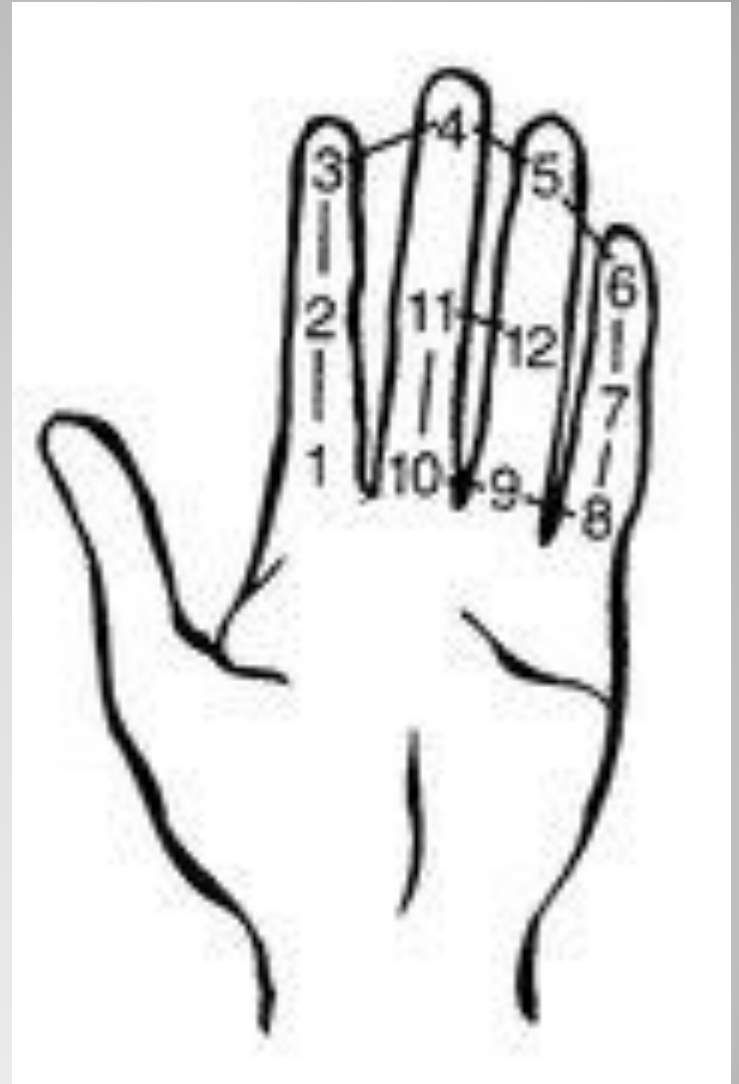
## **AJAPA MANTRA**

- Prāṇāyāma practice includes the movement of more than one breath
- Different segments of left hand allow for the counting of those breaths

Beginners might do 4 breaths

Level 2+ might be able to do at least 12

Often 16 or 24 breaths are done



**Using the left hand to count breaths**



# Chakra Chart



**7<sup>th</sup> Chakra – Sahasrara – Nadi Shodana  
and Meditation**

**6<sup>th</sup> Chakra – Ajna – Nadi Shodana**

**5<sup>th</sup> Chakra – Vishuddha – Sitali, shirkavi, and  
Brehmari, Lion's breath, Ujjayi**

**4<sup>th</sup> Chakra – Anahata – All Breaths: Ujjayi,  
Viloma I & II, Kumbhakas**

**3<sup>rd</sup> Chakra – Manipura – Ujjayi, Khapalbhati,  
Bastrika, and Uddiyana Bandha**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Chakra – Svadhisthana -Dirga Complete,  
and fluid transitions**

**1<sup>st</sup> Chakra – Muladhara – Belly Breathing and full  
complete breaths especially on exhalations**

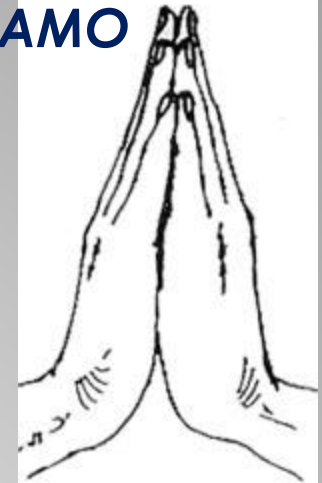
**Prāṇāyāma and the Chakras**

- OM Namō Pranaya
- Pranaya Nama Om
- Pranaya Swaha
- Om Namō Apanaya
- Apanaya Nama Om
- Apanaya Swaha
- Om Swaha
- Harih Om

OM



NAMO



PRANAYA



APANAYA



**CHANT TO PRANA & APANA**

**from Desikachar taught to Leslie Kaminoff**