

Back Breathing (Chest Breathing 1B)

Orange Level

Back Breathing teaches you to use the back of your chest, (your upper back), when you are breathing. It is essential for complete mastery of your breath and for being able to breathe comfortably when in certain poses, (like twists, shoulder stand, etc). As you do this exercise, you'll find your whole body opening up, loosening and even feeling softer inside. You'll notice your breath slowing down, which, as you know by now, in yoga is always a good thing. Along with those benefits comes calmer thinking and more presence of mind. Later, as you become more able to engage the sacral muscles for breathing, you will learn to release stress in your upper back, allowing these areas to become more fluid. It also assists your journey toward more awareness of your spine. As you become aware of these areas and let your tension there go, you'll discover long buried thoughts and feelings floating to the surface and dissolving. Before studying Back Breathing, it's helpful to learn the basic *Chest Breathing 1* first and to practice poses that help release the upper back, like Chest Expansion, Child Pose, Pigeon, Side Bends, Twists and the favourite standby Vinyasas, the Sun Salutation and Moon Salutation.



Main Benefits:

Trains you to use all the breathing muscles in your chest; slows breathing; opens up the body; makes it possible to breathe when in some difficult yoga poses!

Body Parts Used by This Posture: Chest (rib cage) – mostly the upper back, but also front and sides.

Warms You Up for / Builds You Up for: The Wave, Core Breathing, The Fountain (various forms), Relaxation of any kind, Meditation, Chanting

Build Up to with / Warm Up with: Sun Salutations, Moon Salutations, Chest Expansion poses, forward bends like Back Stretch, Leg Clasp, Sleeping Pigeon, Child Poses, Twists, Side Bends

Warms You Up for / Build You Up for: The Wave; Core Breathing; Relaxed Breath 2; Breathing Exercises 14, 17 and 18; Breathing into Your Spine.

Try Learning First: Chest Breathing 1, 2 and/or 2B; Waves on the Shore, The Fountain.

Must Learn First: Chest Breathing 1

Good for These Practice Goals: Better Breathing, Chair Friendly, Office Friendly, Pregnancy Yoga, Senior's Yoga, Clearing, Cleansing & Energizing Heart & Solar Plexus chakras; Chanting from the heart or Solar Plexus.

Recommended for These Health Conditions: Breathing problems such as: asthma, allergic, bronchitis, pneumonia, lung surgery, rhinitis, frozen shoulders, cancer, fibromialgia, chronic headaches, heart conditions, hypothyroidism, throughout pregnancy.

Best Breathing Themes: Orange Level Breathing Theme 7B; Breathing Themes 22B and 23.

Best for Flexibility or Strength: Flexibility & Strength

Traditional Pose Type: Breathing Exercise

Energy Center Used: Heart Center, Solar Plexus (somewhat)

Part of the guided Serenity Yoga program? Yes

Back Breathing (continued)

**This is a simple exercise that can be done anywhere, any time you have a minute.
Do it as long as you like. 1 – 3 minutes is good.**

Best done sitting with your back supported by a wall or a chair

- Or **lying down**.
- Can also be done **standing**.

☞ Take a moment to relax into place.

- Feel your body sinking down, letting go as you breathe out.

☞ Once you're settled, breathe in and bring attention to your upper back, the area around your shoulder blades.

☞ **Breathe toward your supporting surface, (the floor or bed or the back of your chair).**

- If you are standing, breathe toward the back of your rib cage, toward your shoulder blades.

☞ **As you breathe in**

- Notice your back opening up, your shoulder blades spreading gently apart.
- Allow it to float open, stretching gently, rather than forcing it.
- Feel how the expansion spreads across the width of back.

☞ **As you breathe out**

- Notice your back contracting, your shoulder blades drawing together.
- Again, allow this movement to happen naturally, don't force it or 'make it happen'.

☞ **Do this for 1 – 3 minutes (or as long as you like!) with your breaths being about two-thirds full and about two-thirds empty.**



Part 2

Strengthening the Breathing Muscles in the Back of Your Chest.

After you've done Part 1 for 1 – 3 minutes add this part:

☞ **Make your breaths very full.**

- Feel your rib cage expanding to its fullest, stretching wide open.

☞ **Hold your breath.**

- Even press outward with your chest muscles as you hold your breath.
- Feel the muscles all around your chest working hard.

☞ **Hold as long as possible** without feeling like you're going to turn blue! Give yourself enough time to slowly release the pose.

☞ **Release** by letting go of your chest in a controlled dropping motion.

☞ **Do this 2 – 3 times.**