

The Exercise – Chest Breathing 2

This is much like the Discovery Exercise

Start

Lying on your back on a firm surface, or standing against a wall or sitting with your back against the back of your chair. No matter what position you start in, see that your neck, spine & legs are lined up with each other.



Give me air!

Have your chin pointing forward. Take a minute to see that you have good air flow. If you bend your chin too close to your chest, or if you stretch your chin up away from your chest, you'll be cutting off some of your air flow. Experiment with moving your chin up and down until you feel your air passages in the back of your throat fully open.

1. Push your elbows into your supporting surface. Hold them there, firmly, for 6 breaths. (Nice *slow* breaths!) Feel the muscles at the sides of your body working hard.

Relax your elbows. Notice where the muscles are relaxing.

2. Once they've relaxed completely, push again. Push more firmly this time.

Hold for six breaths. Relax.

Wait for the muscles to completely let go of any tension from the push.

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Guess what – push again! *As firmly as you can.*

Hold for six breaths, pushing more and more every time you breathe out.

Relax. And wait as the muscles gratefully let go.

Once you master this exercise

Getting too easy for you?

Getting bored with the exercise? (A sure sign you're getting good at it.)

Try getting the same effect, without using your elbows.

Simply contract and relax the muscles on their own, keeping your arms and elbows relaxed.

Chest Breathing 2 might feel like you're not doing much – but it's a strong muscle builder.

If you'd like to learn more about how to work Chest Breathing 2 into your yoga practice, go to our pages on *Breathing Theme 8*.

Learning Chest Breathing 2

Practicing Breathing with the Sides of Your Chest



Discovery Exercise

This will help you get to know the muscles at the sides of your chest.

Push your elbows into your supporting surface. If you're lying down, push them into the floor. If you're in a chair, push them into the back of the chair.

Where do you feel your muscles working?

Release

Relax your elbows.

Notice the muscles at the sides of your body relaxing.

Push and relax over and over until you have a good sense of the muscles and can feel where they are working for you.

You only need to do this Discovery Exercise once to get to know your muscles. Do this exercise once or twice a day to build up the breathing muscles at the sides of your chest.

Chest Breathing 2

Engaging the Breathing Muscles at the Sides of your Chest

- ??Take a big breath.
 - o All the way in.
- ??Breathe in even more.
- ??Notice where your rib cage is stretching.
- ??Notice what parts of your body are working to give you a breath this full.

Chances are you felt that Discovery Exercise in front of your chest, *and* in the sides of your chest.

The sides of your rib cage are important in getting full, deep breaths. This area is under your arm pits and runs down to the outside of your hip bones. Most of us have forgotten there are muscles there. They don't complain much and we don't spend much time looking at them. Out of site, out of mind.

If you want your breath to be full and rich and energizing, you need to convince these muscles to work for you, even when you're not thinking about them.

How do you do that? Ha ha. I thought you'd never ask! With good stretches and a chest breathing exercise. (There's more to the book than this. If you don't believe me, skip to Yellow Level for a week.)

Good Stretches for the Sides of Your Chest

Any stretch that lifts your arms high toward the ceiling or across and lifts your arms over your head is going to develop the muscles at the sides of your chest. Be sure to include at least one of these during the Warm Up part of your yoga routine.



Complete Breath, Simple Side Bend and **Sitting Side Stretch** are my favourites. They're simple and just about anyone can do them.



- ??If you can't lift your arms over your head, try
- ??Elbow to Knee 1
- ??Elbow to Knee 2
- ??Triangle Discovery



Other good ones include

Wood Chopper



Half Moon

Elbow to Knee 1 or 2



Side Bend



Triangle Poses

