

VARIOUS BREATH TECHNIQUES

Alternate Nostril Breathing (Nadi Sodhan)

This simple, yet most powerful technique, is a *pranayama* that is easy to do, yet can take you through all the stages of your yoga practice.

**How to do Alternate Nostril Breathing:**

- ▶ In this *pranayama*, the breath is always relaxed, deep and full.
- ▶ Have the left hand in Gyan Mudra.
- ▶ Use the thumb of the right hand to close the right nostril, and the index finger or ring finger of the right hand to close the left nostril. This is sometimes called “U Breathing,” because of this mudra.
- ▶ Close the right nostril and gently and fully inhale through the left nostril.
- ▶ Then close the left nostril and exhale through the right nostril.
- ▶ Then inhale through the right nostril.
- ▶ Close the right nostril and exhale through the left nostril.
- ▶ Continue repeating, alternating nostrils after each inhalation.

Benefits of Alternate Nostril Breathing:

- ▶ Creates whole brain functioning by balancing the right and left hemispheres.
- ▶ Is both integrating and grounding.
- ▶ Purifies the *ida* and *pingala nadis*, gently.
- ▶ Creates a deep sense of well-being and harmony on the physical, mental, and emotional levels.
- ▶ Can help with headaches, migraines, and other stress-related symptoms.
- ▶ **Inhale left, exhale right.** Helps to make you calm and integrates unwanted negative emotions and stress. Excellent by itself before bed.
- ▶ **Inhale right, exhale left.** Gives clarity, and positive mood. Helps us to focus on what is important.

Nadi Cleansing

A powerful, classical technique which utilizes *Nadi Sodhan* as well as “U Breathing,” and Breath Ratios. (See *Sets & Meditations*.)

Breath Ratios

When breathing in different breath ratios, we are changing the amount of time that we take to inhale, hold, and exhale the breath. In general, we breathe in an equal breath ratio—equal inhale, equal exhale.

Consciously using different breath ratios can yield varied effects.

- ▶ By **emphasizing inhaling**, the sympathetic part of the autonomic nervous system boosts the heart rate and blood pressure, boosts alertness and stimulates us.
- ▶ By **emphasizing exhaling**, the parasympathetic nervous system slows the heartbeat and relaxes the circulation, nerves, and digestive system. It relaxes us and promotes elimination, both physically and emotionally.
- ▶ You can use mantra to measure the ratios. For example:

1:4:2 (Inhale 1, hold 4, exhale 2). This is used in the Nadi Cleansing *pranayama*. It is powerfully purifying and cleansing.

Left & Right Nostril Breathing

Through the simple mechanism of closing or opening one of the nostrils, the yogi has a wide array of techniques to control his moods and energies. The quality of *Prana* processed through the two nostrils differs corresponding with the qualities associated with the two sides of the brain. The nerves going out from the two brain hemisphere cross at the level of the eyebrows. The left hemisphere is connected to the right side of the body and right nostril; the right hemisphere to the left side of the body and left nostril.

We breathe predominantly through one nostril or the other at any given time. The dominant nostril alternates rhythmically every 90 to 150 minutes. The length of the cycle reflects universal rhythm, individual temperament, and the personal state of mental and physical balance. The rhythm itself is mediated mainly through structures in the hypothalamus and pituitary, though other areas in the brain are also involved.

You may use the technique of inhaling and exhaling exclusively through either the left or right nostril in order to benefit from the quality associated with that nostril. For instance, breathe exclusively through the left nostril to deal with compulsive eating habits.

Breathing through the left nostril is associated with:

- ▶ *Ida*, the *nadi* which ends at the left nostril
- ▶ *Apana*, the cleansing energy
- ▶ The Moon energy—cooling, receptive
- ▶ Calmness ▶ Empathy
- ▶ Sensitivity ▶ Synthesis

Breathing through the right nostril is associated with:

- ▶ *Pingala*, the *nadi* ending at the right nostril
- ▶ *Prana*, the nurturing energy
- ▶ The Sun energy—warming, projective
- ▶ Vigor ▶ Concentration
- ▶ Alertness ▶ Readiness-for-action
- ▶ Will power



Inhale Sat • Exhale Naam