

DIAPHRAGMATIC BREATHING

The diaphragm is a dome shaped muscle that forms the floor of the rib cage. It is the most efficient muscle for breathing and relaxation, although most people are not used to using the diaphragm. Diaphragmatic or belly breathing is an important technique to learn because it helps settle down or relax the autonomic nervous system. The correct use of diaphragmatic breathing can help to quiet brain activity resulting in the relaxation of all the muscles and organs of the body. This is accomplished by slow rhythmic breathing concentrated in the diaphragm muscle rather than the chest.

HOW TO DO PROPER RELAXATION BREATHING

- Start by lying on your back or reclining in a chair in a relaxed position. Place one hand on your chest and the other on your abdomen.
- Relax your jaw by placing your tongue on the roof of your mouth and keeping your teeth slightly apart.
- Take a deep breath in through your nose, letting the abdomen expand and rise while you keep your upper chest, neck and shoulders relaxed.
- As you breathe out through your mouth, allow your abdomen and chest to fall. Exhale completely.
- Remember to breathe slowly. Do not force your breathing.
- Repeat for ____ minutes.

Once you become comfortable with this exercise, try placing a book on your abdomen and repeating the steps above. You can see and feel the book and your abdomen rise with each inhalation and fall with each exhalation.

