

THE PELVIC FLOOR AND 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 familiar with 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.
- Try to focus on the relationship between your breathing diaphragm and the pelvic floor muscles (the pelvic diaphragm).
- 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 in, let the pelvic floor relax.
- As you breathe out through your mouth, allow your abdomen and chest to fall and tighten and contract the pelvic floor muscles (a Kegel exercise). Exhale completely.
- Remember to breathe slowly. Do not force your breathing.
- Repeat for ____ minutes.

