

Alternate Nostril Breathing (Nadi Shodhan Pranayama)

As we know, *yoga* is not just about exercising the body, we also expand the mind & the spirit. One of the ways we do this is through alternate nostril breathing also known as *Nadi Shodhan Pranayama*. Alternate nostril breathing purifies & balances the *nadis*, (one's energy channels), ensuring a smooth flow of *prana*, (life-force), throughout the body.

Nadi Shodhan Pranayama also...

- Is cathartic for many circulatory & respiratory issues.
- Sharpens the mind.
- Helps to regulate & maintain body temperature.
- Relaxes mind & body.
- Harmonises left & right hemispheres of the brain, correlating to the logical & emotional sides of one's personality.
- Mindfulness: assists one in breaking cycles of unhelpful mental ruminating & in bringing the mind back to the present.

One of the main benefits of alternate nostril breathing is that it may lower stress. A 2013 study found that people who practiced alternate nostril breathing lowered their perceived stress levels.

In the same study, alternate nostril breathing was the only type of breath work that was found to have a positive effect on cardiovascular function. It was shown to significantly lower factors such as heart rate, respiratory rate, and blood pressure.

After 12 weeks of practice, the participants had improvement in heart rate, respiratory rate, and blood pressure. The participants were taught the practice for 30 minutes three times per week by a certified yoga instructor. (Emily Cronkleton (2018) Medically reviewed by Timothy J. Legg, PhD, CRNP)

The Method...

1. One should first sit comfortably with spine straight & shoulders relaxed.
2. Resting one's left hand on the left knee, palm open to the sky or in *Chin Mudra*, (so that thumb & index finger touch at the tips).
3. With eyes closed, one begins by placing the tips of the index & middle fingers of the right hand between the eyebrows, resting the ring finger on the left nostril & the thumb on the right.
4. First, one takes in an elongated, unforced deep breath via the left nostril while gently occluding (closing) the right with the thumb. One then removes the thumb & occludes the left with the ring finger while exhaling slowly from the right.
5. Next, after inhaling via the same right nostril, one then removes the ring finger & uses the thumb to occlude the left once more & exhales to complete a round of *Nadi Shodhan Pranayama*.
6. One continues to inhale & exhale from alternate nostrils until one has completed 9 rounds or for 3 minutes. Try practising at the end of a 5 or 10 minute meditation, and gradually increase if the practice resonates with you.

Remember, breathe in via the same nostril one has exhaled from & take *smooth & effortless, deep breaths*. This is very important, as forced or hard breaths build tension rather than releasing it!

The next time you're feeling rundown or under pressure but perhaps you're at work or on the bus & don't have the room or energy to fully salute the sun, 3x mins of recharging *Nadi Shodhan Pranayama* is only your fingertips away.

Read more...

Cronkleton,E(2018)Healthline.com/health/alternate-nostril-breathing
<https://www.healthline.com/health/alternate-nostril-breathing>