



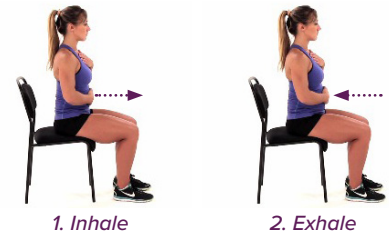
Diaphragmatic (Belly) Breathing Instructions

The diaphragm is the most efficient muscle for breathing. It is also a part of your core muscles that help to stabilize your spine. Keeping this muscle strong will help you be stronger for activities after surgery. In addition, regular, slow diaphragmatic breathing helps to decrease stress and to control pain by calming your nervous system, which will help quite a bit after surgery.

As you begin this process, it is normal for it to feel challenging or different at first – especially if your body is used to doing shallow breathing. Go slow. If you feel light-headed while doing this, it is a sign of trying too hard or over-breathing. Changing techniques may be helpful. Please practice for at least five to ten minutes, twice daily, in a comfortable position and then in different positions.

TECHNIQUE 1

Start by placing a hand on the abdomen and one on the breastbone. Gently attempt to breathe into the hand on the abdomen only (try to minimize the hand on the breast bone's movement). Don't try too hard. This should be a gentle effort. If this is too hard, move onto the next technique.



TECHNIQUE 2

Try to breathe in for a count of “two” (with each counted number taking one second) and out for a count of “three”. If this feels too fast, try breathing in for “three” and out for “four”. Adjust the numbers so the exercise is comfortable and not stressful. (Hint: The elongation of the outbreath can create an opportunity for a deeper next breath).

TECHNIQUE 3

Inhale as you normally would. On exhalation, focus on exhaling all of the air completely out of your lungs. Pause and wait until the body wants to breathe again. Let any sense of effort drop away. This should feel easy.

TECHNIQUE 4

Imagine a breathing hole (like a whale's or dolphin's) in the bottom of each foot. With each breath, imagine breathing in through the bottom of your feet and up to your abdomen. On the exhalation, this is reversed as you imagine breathing out of the bottom of your feet.

If all of this is extremely taxing or difficult, try these techniques while lying on your belly, just to become aware of your breathing. This may help you feel your diaphragm muscle even while breathing with minimal effort. Practice for five minutes at a time focusing on the sensation of deeper breathing.

Other tips: Use the internet to your advantage. If you search for videos on diaphragmatic breathing, you will find many videos providing you with instruction and demonstration. Please let us know if you have any additional difficulties. You can reach the program manager at 401-793-2439.