

Diaphragmatic Breathing Part I

1. Back lying on the floor without a pillow, top of head just touching a wall, knees bent. (Note: If you have to use a pillow because of neck pain, then do so but understand that over time the goal is to slowly reduce the thickness of the pillow until you can perform the exercise without one).
 2. Support the involved extremity in the position of maximum comfort. (The position of comfort will be found by placing the nervous system in its most tension-free anatomical position.) Usually a wedge pillow to support the scapula in slight protraction with the elbow flexed will be most comfortable. (If the lower roots of the plexus are more irritable than the middle or upper roots, then slight elbow extension beyond neutral may be more comfortable.)
 3. Breathe in through your nose and fill your lower lungs with air; this causes your abdomen to rise as if blowing up a balloon.
 4. Breathe out through pursed lips as if you were playing the flute. Do this by tightening your stomach muscles, which will lower your rib cage.
 5. Continue this rhythm of breathing in through the nose and out through the mouth, making sure that motion only occurs in the stomach. This is breathing with your diaphragm.
 6. Continue breathing with the diaphragm; add movements of the spine as described in step 7.
 7. Slowly arch your low back as you breathe in (Figure A) and flatten your low back as you breathe out (Figure B). These movements of the spine should feel like a wave motion up and down. The movements should be gentle and relaxed.
- * Relax your neck
 - * Breathing in, the spine will shorten, causing the chin to nod down.
 - * Breathing out, the spine will lengthen, causing the chin to nod back up.
(Note: this should occur naturally. There should be no active movement of the neck.)
 - * You can facilitate the movement of the head by allowing your eyes to initiate the movement of the chin, i.e., as you breathe in and your stomach rises and your back arches, look towards your knees. As you breathe out and your stomach falls and your back flattens against the floor, look up to the wall behind you.
 - * Breathing in, the spine will shorten, causing your body to move away from the wall
Breathing out, the spine will lengthen, causing your body to move into the wall.

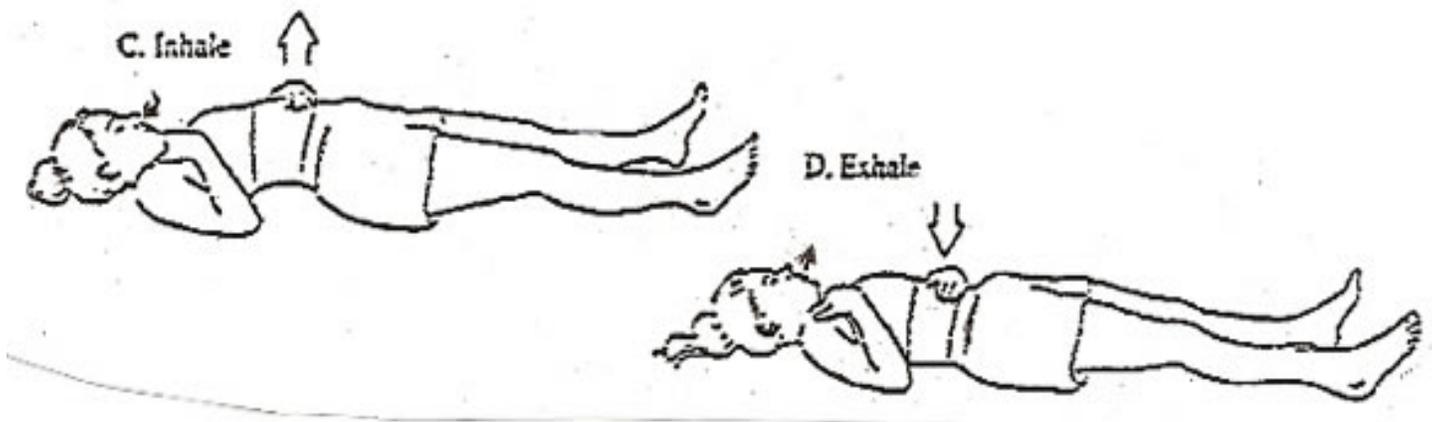


Diaphragmatic Breathing Part II

Breathe exactly as you did in Part I except now with your legs straight. It is important that the legs remain totally relaxed.

1. Slowly arch your low back as you breathe in (Figure C) and flatten your lower back as you breathe out (Figure D). Unlike the breathing in Part I, the movements of the spine are less due to the weight of the legs and the tension in the hip flexors. Therefore, when you breathe in and arch your spine, it should be easier than it was in Part I, but when you breathe out and flatten your spine it should be harder. You should feel as if your legs are an “anchor” resisting the flattening of your back. Remember that your legs should remain totally relaxed.

2. As you breathe in through your nose and out through pursed lips, you will notice that the head has less motion than in Part I and that the abdominal muscles pull the sternum down more and hence stretch the scalenes more effectively. This must be a gentle stretch and should not cause an increase in your pain.



Diaphragmatic Breathing Part III

Breathe exactly as you did in Part II except now actively turn your legs in once you have flattened your back while breathing out (Figure F). As you relax your abdomen to arch your back and breathe in, relax your legs also (Figure E). Repeat this 10 times. Now go back to breathing with your legs relaxed during inhalation and exhalation as in Part II. Note that your legs are more relaxed and it is easier to flatten your back. Your scalenes should be more relaxed also.

