

Bellows Breathing / Breath of Fire

NAME:

Breath of Fire, *Bhastrika Pranayama*, Bellows Breathing

PURPOSE/EFFECTS:

Breath of Fire is a type of intense breathing exercise that has many effects. It calms the mind and stimulates the body, increasing oxygen and decreasing carbon dioxide in the blood. It is excellent to do before meditation.

Classically, there are many other benefits to Breath of Fire. Various yoga scriptures claim that it will increase digestive power, eliminate diseases, cleanse the *nadis* (energy pathways) in the body, awaken the Kundalini, and so forth. It is also claimed to be a powerful method for metabolism.

METHOD:

Summary

Breathe in and out through your nose very quickly and forcefully.

Long Version

1. Sit in "lotus" posture. That is, on the floor with your back and neck straight and aligned.
 2. Keep your mouth closed. BOF is done through the nose. Make sure there is no mucus blocking the nostrils. Breathing should be free and clear.
 3. Now breathe in and out as quickly and forcefully as possible. Use your stomach muscles to power the breath. The stomach muscles should expand and contract like a blacksmith's bellows.
 4. After a certain number of breaths (try 10 to start) or number of seconds (or minutes), end by taking a long, full, deep inhale.
- It's recommended you try for at least 1 minute to begin. Do the best you can.
5. Rest while breathing normally.
 6. End here, or do another round.

HISTORY:

Bhastrika is a traditional Kundalini yoga pranayama method from India.

CAUTIONS:

Breath of Fire, like any pranayama, comes with a lot of warnings. First and foremost, only do this if both nostrils are open. Do not practice Breath of Fire with one nostril plugged. Furthermore, if you have high blood pressure, have any heart condition, or are pregnant, you should not do this practice. Pranayama is intense, physical exercise, and should only be practiced when completely healthy.

Breath of Fire may make you feel quite dizzy.

NOTES:

Focus your mind on your breathing or your third eye during this practice. You can also mentally repeat the mantra "Om."

You may find several variations on this practice, some of them involving arm motions.