

My Healthy LIFE

Lifestyle Improvement For Every Day



My Healthy LIFE

First edition

Developed by Allina Health. This service is offered at United Hospital.

© 2023 Allina Health System

The publisher believes that information in this manual was accurate at the time the manual was published. However, because of the rapidly changing state of scientific and medical knowledge, some of the facts and recommendations in the manual may be out-of-date by the time you read it. Your health care provider is the best source for current information and medical advice in your particular situation.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, without permission in writing from the publisher.

Disclaimer

This publication is for general information only and is not intended to provide specific advice or recommendations for any individual. The information it contains cannot be used to diagnose medical conditions or prescribe treatment. The information provided is designed to support, not replace, the relationship that exists between a patient and his/her existing physician.

For specific information about your health condition, please contact your health care provider.



Table of Contents

Part 1: Breathing	5
Part 2: Relaxation	9
Part 3: Yoga	13
Part 4: How to Manage Fatigue	21
Part 5: How To Manage Stress	23
Part 6: Healthy Lifestyle Changes	27

Welcome

Congratulations in taking part in My Healthy LIFE.

You have already taken the hardest step: the first one toward making the decision to improve your health.

My Healthy LIFE will educate and help promote healthy living to increase your independence.

We want you to succeed!

In following the program, you will develop healthy living skills so they become part of your everyday activities and routines.

Courage Kenny Rehabilitation Institute, Occupational Therapy

Part 1: Breathing

Why Proper Breathing is Important

A recent hospital stay, procedure or new diagnosis can cause you stress. When you are anxious, your body reacts in many ways, including tension in the muscles that control your breathing.

Your breathing becomes more shallow and your breathing rate increases as your body tries to get more oxygen. This type of breathing can:

- lead to rapid, shallow “chest” breathing (Your lungs don’t get enough air as a result.)
- cause the large breathing muscle (diaphragm) that separates your lungs from your stomach area to not work well.

During improper breathing, air often gets trapped in your lungs, pushing down on your diaphragm. Your neck and chest muscles then do extra work, which can leave your diaphragm weak. This means it won’t work as well as it should.

Becoming aware of your breathing can help reduce your stress and make you feel better.

Benefits of Proper Breathing

Proper breathing has many benefits:

- increases the oxygen supply in your body
- helps your lungs work at full capacity
- keeps your heart and respiration rates steady
- improves your circulation
- helps your overall health
- increases your energy
- promotes clearer thinking skills
- decreases stress or anxiety
- helps you feel calm.

How to Breathe Properly

There are two ways to breathe properly.

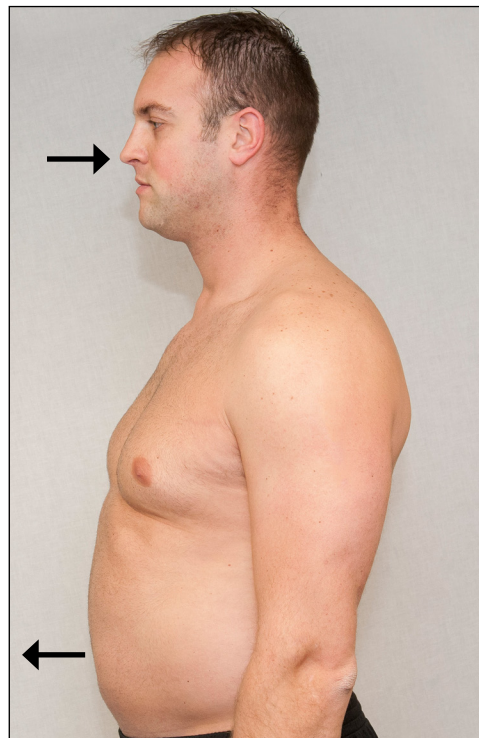
Diaphragm (belly breathing)

This exercise will teach you how to use your diaphragm correctly when you breathe. This will:

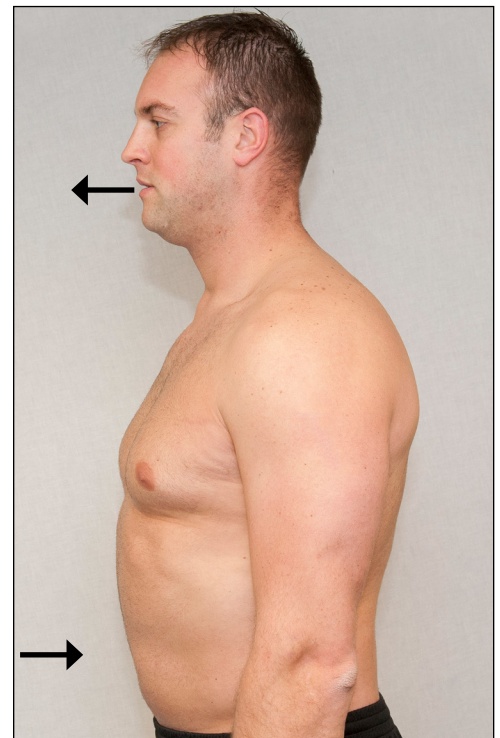
- strengthen your diaphragm
- slow your breathing rate (making you breathe easier)
- decrease the amount of oxygen you need
- use less effort and energy to breathe.

To breathe:

- Breathe in slowly through your nose as deeply as possible.
- Push your belly out as you breathe in. (A)
- Let your breath out through your mouth, slowly and completely. Tighten your stomach muscles, bringing your belly in as you breathe out. (B)



A



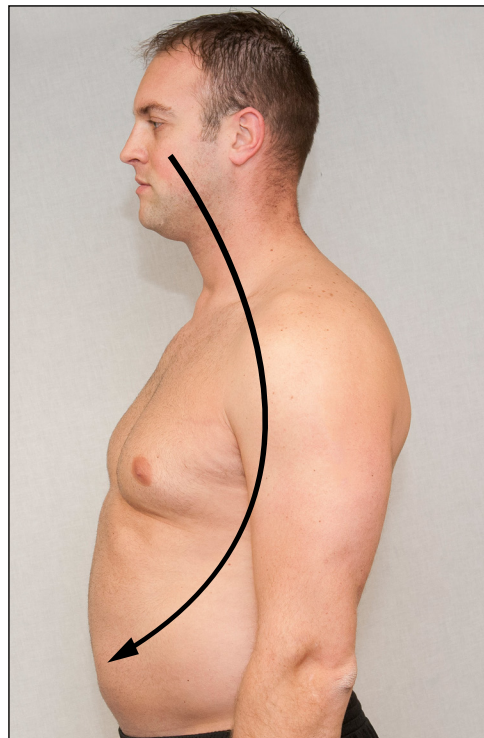
B

© Allina Health System

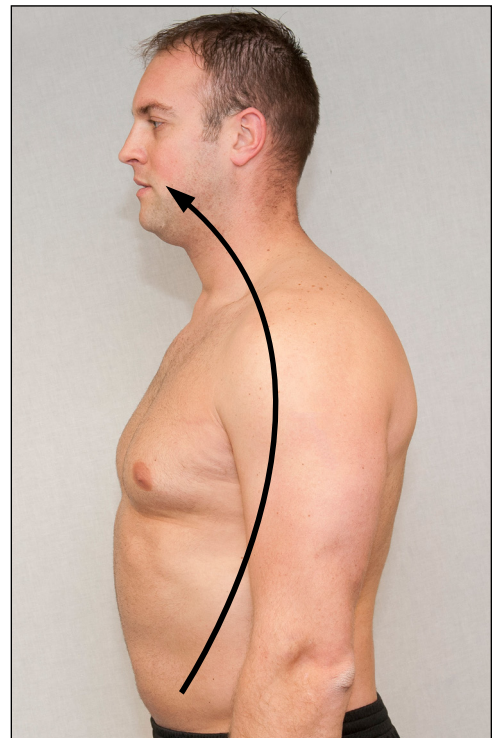
Three-part breathing

- Sit in a chair or lie down on your back. Choose the position that offers the most comfort.
- Take a deep breath in through your nose. (A)
 - Let the air fill your chest cavity.
 - Feel the air expand to your rib cage.
 - Feel your belly expand as you breathe into the bottom of your lungs.
- Breathe out through your mouth. (B)
 - Let the air go from your lower lungs.
 - Feel the air leave your rib cage.
 - Feel the air leave through your chest cavity.

As you do this exercise, imagine the air flowing through your lungs, rib cage and chest cavity.



A



B

© Allina Health System

Part 2: Relaxation

Why It's Important

Stress can cause anxiety and tension. If you don't control stress, it can cause you to feel irritable, lose your ability concentrate and make you sick.

Learning how to relax is important to lower your stress level. Your body can return to a balanced state when you lower your mental and physical tension.

Guided imagery

Guided imagery is a gentle but powerful technique that focuses and directs your imagination to ease stress and enhance well-being.

It uses words and images to help move your attention away from the worry, stress and pain and help you find your own inner strength and creativity to support healing.



© Allina Health System

Imagine your favorite scene or place.

Try to relax anytime you feel tense during the day. Find a quiet room. Remove all distractions and turn off the lights. You may play soft, soothing music.

- Think about a pleasant or restful place.
It can be anywhere: an ocean, forest, starry sky or a safe place at home.
- Let peaceful thoughts of your favorite scene or place relax you.
- Close your eyes and picture that scene or place.
- Focus on the sights, sounds and smells of your favorite scene or place as you relax.
- Breathe the fresh air in through your nose, filling your lungs completely. Breathe all of the air out through your mouth.
- Let your body relax and your breathing become deeper, feeling relaxed and free.

For healing

- Imagine a time when you felt your healthiest.
- Imagine what you were doing at that time. It could be taking a walk, spending time with loved ones or doing something you enjoy.
- Imagine how this made you feel.
- Breathe the fresh air in through your nose, filling your lungs completely. Breathe all of the air out through your mouth.
- Let your body relax and your breathing become deeper, feeling relaxed and free.
- Feel yourself getting more energy with each breath.
- Bring your awareness and senses to these feelings.
- Bring in energy each time you breathe in. Let go of tension, stress and pain each time you breathe out.
- Focus your mind on these feelings as you take a few more breaths in and out.

Progressive relaxation

The goal of progressive relaxation is to tighten and release muscles from the top of your head to your toes. When you are done, you will feel relaxed.

This exercise will take 10 to 15 minutes. Wear comfortable clothing. Go into a quiet room. Remove all distractions and turn off the lights. You may play soft, soothing music. Get comfortable, sitting or lying down.

Have someone read the directions on the next page to you. Once you have done this a few times, you can do this on your own.

Minutes and Seconds	What to Say
0	Before I start, I would like you to take a few seconds to relax as much as you can on your own. Find a comfortable position.
1 minute	Move your attention to your face. Wrinkle up your forehead and hold. Stop, relax and soften your forehead.
2 minutes, 30 seconds	Close your eyelids tightly shut and hold. Stop. Relax your eyes, keeping them closed, gently and comfortably.
3 minutes, 30 seconds	Clench your jaw and bite your teeth together without straining. Hold. Stop. Relax.
5 minutes	Press your lips together tightly. Stop. Relax and soften your face.
6 minutes	Clench both fists. Relax, letting your fingers become loose. Clench your fists again. Let go. Let your fingers straighten out. Focus on relaxing your whole body.
6 minutes, 30 seconds	Straighten your arms to feel the most tension in the back of your arms. Hold. Stop. Relax. Put your arms in a comfortable position. Your arms should feel heavy as you relax.
7 minutes	Tense your buttocks as you breathe in. Release and relax as you breathe out. Tense your thigh muscles as you breathe in again. Relax your thigh muscles as your breathe out.
7 minutes, 30 seconds	Gently press your toes on the floor as you breathe in. Ease the pressure from your toes as you breathe out. Press your toes on the floor as you breathe in and relax as you breathe out.
8 minutes	Breathe in and breathe out as you let the tension slide away from your face. Let the final tension leave your neck and shoulders. Feel the relaxation down your arms and legs. Ease into regular, even breathing.
10 minutes	Gently ease your arms into motion as you stretch, begin to open your eyes, and wake up your feet, hands, arms and legs.

Part 3: Yoga

Warm Up

- Neck stretches: Gently move your neck from your ear to your shoulder and look up and down. Repeat other side.
- Shoulder rolls: Gently roll your shoulders in both directions.
- Wrists: Gently open and close your hands and wiggle your fingers. Move your wrists in circles.
- Ankles: Gently lift your foot up and down and wiggle your toes. Move your ankle in circles.

Cat/Cow Stretch

This helps relieve stress, improve your circulation and give a gently stretch to your spine.

- Sit in a chair with your hips, knees and ankles in alignment. Put your hands on your thighs or knees.
- Breathe in and sit up tall. Pull your shoulder blades down.
- Breathe out as you round your back, tucking your chin into your chest.
- Do this stretch 3 to 4 times.



© Allina Health System

Arm Lifts

This helps improve your upper body strength, strengthen your heart, and improve your blood flow (circulation).



© Allina Health System

- Breathe in as you lift your arms straight forward to shoulder level.
- Slightly lower one arm.
- Hold for 3 to 4 breaths.
- Lower your arms all the way down.
- Repeat with the opposite arm slightly lowered.
- Hold for 3 to 4 breaths.
- Do this stretch 3 to 4 times.

Forward Bend

This helps ease the tension in your upper back and neck, and helps improve your blood flow (circulation).



© Allina Health System

- Breathe in through your nose.
- Breathe out through your mouth as you bend forward over your knees until you are comfortable.
- Keep your neck in a neutral position.
- Let your hands reach out over your knees, toward the ground.
- Take one breath in through your nose.
- As you breathe out through your mouth, slowly return to your sitting position.
- Do this stretch 3 to 4 times.

Cobra

This supports the health of your heart and lungs and helps you with deep breathing.



© Allina Health System

- Sit with a straight back.
- Bend your elbows and face your palms away from you.
- Breathe in through your nose as you lift your chest and chin up.
- Breathe out through your mouth.
- Return to your starting position.
- Do this stretch 3 to 4 times.

Leg Lift

This improves the strength of your lower body, improves your endurance and blood flow.



© Allina Health System

- Sit tall.
- Breathe in through your nose as you lift one knee so your foot is off the floor.
- Put your hands under your thigh or around your knee to support your leg.
- Hold for a few breaths.
- Lower your leg.
- Repeat on the other side.
- Do this stretch 3 to 4 times.

Twist

This increases your circulation and flexibility of your spine.



© Allina Health System

- Sit.
- Take a deep breath in through your nose.
- As you let your breath out through your mouth, twist to the right, putting your left hand on your right knee and your right hand to the side.
- Don't bend. Sit tall.
- Take 3 to 4 breaths in this twisted position. On your last breath, breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth while returning to center.
- Repeat on the other side.
- Do this stretch 3 to 4 times.

Cool Down

- Shoulder rolls: Gently roll your shoulders in both directions.
- Shoulder shrugs: Gently slide your shoulders up to your ears and then down.
- Reach your arms over your head and return to your side.

Part 4: How to Manage Your Fatigue

Pacing activities during your week:

Planning your time:

Making priorities:

Pausing and re-assessing:

Taking purposeful breaks:

Working smarter, not harder:

Part 5: How To Manage Your Stress

Stress

Stress is your body's fight-or-flight response. You may feel extra energy surge through your body if you are in an emergency situation. You may also feel this energy if you are worried or anxious about something.

Stress can be found in many places: home, work, school, family or traffic. Time demands and pressures can take a toll on you physically and emotionally. It can give you health problems or make an existing problem worse.

According to the American Heart Association (AHA), stress can cause issues for your heart. When you have stress that doesn't let up, your heart rate can increase and your blood pressure can damage your arteries.

Stress that lasts for days or weeks can weaken your immune system and you can start having headaches and stomachaches, according to the AHA.

Trying to manage stress with unhealthy habits like smoking and drinking too much alcohol can increase blood pressure and cause more damage.

It's important to know the causes of your stress and how to manage them.

Signs of stress

People react to stress in different ways. These are some general signs of stress:

- feeling tired all of the time
- feeling overwhelmed
- a change in eating habits (not hungry, too hungry, upset stomach)
- an increase in the use of alcohol, tobacco or drugs
- a change in normal bowel or bladder habits
- aches or pains not caused by exercise
- a change in normal sleep patterns
- emotional upsets (anger, anxiety, depression).

Tips to manage stress

When you are under stress, you need to take good care of yourself.

- Eat healthful meals rich in vegetables, whole grains, fruit and healthful fats. Avoid caffeine drinks such as coffee or soft drinks. Drink at least 8 glasses of water each day.
- Do not smoke, use e-cigarettes or chew smokeless tobacco. The harmful effects of tobacco will do your body no good.
- Get plenty of rest. Sleep 8 hours a night.
- Get some kind of exercise each day. Go for walk or bike ride, do yoga, swim, join a dance class or do stretching exercises. Try something new.
- Meditate. Think of a peaceful place and go there in your mind.
- Write in a journal. Write down what causes the stress (people, places, events), how it makes you feel, how you act to the stress and what you do to make yourself feel better.
- If you notice your mind racing or worrying, take a minute to breathe deeply. Gently focus on something in the moment such as your breathing, scenery or birds.
- Wear comfortable, loose-fitting clothing whenever possible. Take your shoes off if you can.
- Notice the tension in your jaw, neck, shoulders and back. Stretch to release it.
- Do guided imagery or other relaxation exercises on pages 9 to 11.
- Do an activity you enjoy:
 - taking a bubble bath
 - visiting a friend
 - listening to music
 - reading
 - watching sports.
- Try aromatherapy.

Your Plan To Reduce Stress

1. What activities do you currently do that help you relax?

2. How is this working for you?

3. If your current activities aren't helping you relax, consider adding ideas from page 24. List 3 possible activities that you are willing to do to help you relax.

4. Choose 1 activity you can do this week. What is it?
When will you do it?

5. How will you make sure you do it?

6. Who in your social support group can help you with this activity?

7. What might get in the way of you doing this activity?

8. How can you plan to get rid of this barrier?

9. How will you reward yourself for your success?

Part 6: Healthy Lifestyle Changes

Congratulations on taking steps toward positive change in your life. Lifestyle change is difficult for everyone. Having a well-thought plan is essential to meeting your goals.

Take a few minutes to consider ways to increase your follow-through as you transition home. Use the questions below to help you use aspects of My Healthy LIFE into your everyday life. Be clear and specific.

My health-related goal is: _____

■ I already achieved: _____

■ When I achieve my goal I will have: _____

■ I rate my motivation as a: _____ out of 10. (1 is not at all and 10 is extremely motivated.)

■ _____ will help motivate me.

■ _____ will be challenging.

■ I will manage my challenges by: _____

■ I will ask _____ to support me.

■ I will reward myself for following through by: _____

Here are some ways to help get you started on using My Healthy LIFE in your everyday life:

1. Set a specific time and day each week to complete the program or parts of the program. For example, spend 10 minutes before bed to do breathing or relaxation exercises, or do yoga movements in the morning.
2. Use a checklist or calendar to track your progress.
3. Keep a journal and write down how you feel before and after you complete My Healthy LIFE. Take a look back and see how your body has responded to completing this program.
4. Gather support. Tell friends and family members about My Healthy LIFE. Ask them to support you in ways that are meaningful to you.
5. Find other ways to track progress, such as writing down your fatigue and energy levels, overall mood or happiness levels each day.
6. Reward yourself for progress.



AllinaHealth

**COURAGE KENNY
REHABILITATION
INSTITUTE**

allinahealth.org