

Relaxation Techniques

General Information

Stress — physical or emotional — can reduce your body's ability to heal. When you thoughtfully relax, the tension in your body and mind can begin to melt away.

These techniques are meant to help you relax, reduce stress and pain. If you have pain with an exercise, stop and try again later.

Benefits of Relaxation

Relaxation will:

- help you feel less short of breath by learning to breathe more deeply
- improve the way your body responds to stress
- lower your body's stress hormones which may reduce your pain
- increase circulation and oxygen to your brain
- give you better control of your blood pressure
- improve your sleep.

Other benefits may include:

- better posture
- feeling less tired
- reduced fear, worry and sadness about your health or your pain
- increased happiness, concentration and well-being about your health
- need for less pain medicine.

Progressive Relaxation

This exercise can reduce stress and give you a sense of well-being. The goal is to tighten and release muscles from the top of your head to your toes. When you are done, you will feel relaxed.

- Close your eyes or keep your eyes open and soften your gaze onto one spot.
- Bring your attention to your breathing. Notice your breath coming in and out of your nose. Feel your chest move up and down with each breath in and out and move it deeper, letting your belly expand.
- Starting at the top of your head, imagine a gentle, safe wave of relaxation that moves slowly and warmly down your body. Imagine the wave can help you find any places that need to relax and give yourself permission to relax.
- Bring your attention to the top of your head and begin to imagine a wave coming from above you.
- Breathe in and with your next breath out, imagine it flowing through your head. Let your jaw and face soften and relax.
- Breathe in.
- With your next breath out, focus on the back of your neck and shoulders. Let them soften and relax.
- Breathe in.

(over)

- With your next breath out, imagine the wave moving through each arm all the way to your hands. Let your hands become heavy.
- Breathe in.
- With your next breath out, imagine a wave of relaxation roll gently and safely down your spine. Let all of your back muscles relax and soften.
- Continue to breathe comfortably. Feel the wave flow down as you breathe out.
- Let the wave flow through your pelvic area and hips into your upper legs and thighs.
- Breathe in.
- With your next breath out, allow the wave to find any areas in your legs and knees that want to relax. Give them permission to soften.
- Breathe in.
- With your next breath out, feel the wave move into your calves, then your feet. Imagine your feet become a little heavier.
- Take two deep breaths. Imagine any remaining stress gently flowing out the bottoms of your feet.

Shoulder Relaxation

- Tighten your shoulders by lifting them up toward your ears. Let them go as high and tight as they will go and breathe in through your nose. (A)
- Slowly drop your shoulders with a sigh as you breathe out through your mouth. Imagine your muscles letting go. (B)
- Repeat at least 3 times.



A



B