

Neck / Back Pain And Breathing

Low back pain will affect 80 - 95% of us at some point in our lives. Unfortunately, most people hold stress in their neck or upper back. If your pain is posture-related, one of the simplest techniques used to reduce back pain is diaphragmatic breathing. The main purpose of this technique is to retrain breathing to relieve/decrease the work done by your neck and upper back musculature.

Your diaphragm muscle is supposed to function to pull air into the lungs and then expel it with assistance of your abdominal muscles. Many times, instead of using our diaphragm properly, we breathe shallowly which causes us to overuse our chest and neck muscles. This can cause a chronic tightening of secondary respiratory muscles, thus causing neck and back pain.

Not sure if you are breathing properly - here is a simple test. Place one hand over your chest and one hand on your stomach, take a deep breath, and observe which hand is moving more. If the hand over the chest is moving more, you are not using your diaphragm properly when you are breathing. To help correct this, lie on your back, breathe in slowly through your nose so that the hand on your stomach moves out while the hand on your chest remains as still as possible. Then, gently contract your abdominal muscles as you exhale through your mouth, again keeping the hand on your chest as still as possible. Once you are able to perform this while lying down, perform the same respiratory activities while seated, then standing, and eventually with work or recreational activities.

You may still be wondering what this has to do with your back. First, your diaphragm is one of your core muscles. When your diaphragm is weak, it can cause an imbalance by forcing other core muscles to work in its place. Therefore, when you are using your diaphragm properly, it can also help reduce the strain and tension in other muscles that have been overworking. Second, your diaphragm attaches to your lumbar spine. So, when the diaphragm moves, you are helping to increase blood flow around it.

This type of breathing should become your normal breathing pattern in everyday living. Once you have mastered the technique, you can enjoy more pain free days and overall better health for years to come.

Goodlatte, James. "Healing Back Pain Through Breathing". Epoch Times. August 12, 2009

Diaphragmatic Breathing: Relieving Lower Back Pain with Your Breathing. www.lower-back-pain-answers.com

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