

BREATHE EASIER WITH PHYSIOTHERAPY  
MĀ TE KŌMIRI KA NGĀWARI TE WHAKAHĀ

# RELAXED BREATHING

When you breathe correctly  
you'll feel healthier, more relaxed  
and energetic.

[www.physiotherapy.org.nz](http://www.physiotherapy.org.nz)



## RELAXED BREATHING

How we breathe affects our health and wellness. You can use this exercise to help you develop the relaxed, natural breathing that your body is designed for.

If you practice this exercise regularly, it'll become a habit. You'll feel more relaxed and energetic.

Sit in a comfortable chair or lie down to do this exercise at first. As you practice, you'll be able to do it easily in most situations - while standing, walking, playing sport or sitting at your desk at work, for example.

Choose a time and place where you won't be disturbed.

- Lie on your back comfortably. It may help to have a pillow under your head and knees. You could also sit in a comfortable chair. You may like to close your eyes.
- Place one hand on your belly, with your other hand resting by your side.
- Gently close your mouth, lips together, and keep your jaw loose.
- Breathe in gently through your nose, keeping your upper chest relaxed and not moving. Feel your belly rise and your waist expand as you breathe in. Your breath should be silent and not forced.
- Breathe out lightly through your nose, without forcing, keeping your belly relaxed.
- Relax and pause at the end of each breath out. Notice how fully you can breathe out.
- As you repeat this exercise, concentrate on 'letting go' of any tension in your body - especially in your jaw, neck, shoulders and hands.
- Repeat these gentle, relaxing breaths as many times as you like but perhaps for a minimum of five or six breaths. Then repeat a few times a day, fitting around your usual routine - for example, before you get up in the morning, when you're relaxing in the evening, and when you get into bed at night.

(If you have trouble breathing through your nose, you may need to see your doctor and get some treatment for that).

Physiotherapy New Zealand acknowledges the Cardiothoracic Special Interest Group for assisting with information in this leaflet.



## RELAXING MORE DEEPLY

- Lie or sit in a comfortable position.
- Starting with your toes, tighten them and hold for two or three seconds, then relax your toes and let go. Repeat this with your calves, thighs, buttocks, back, shoulders, neck, face and jaw.
- When you're feeling relaxed all over, place one hand on your chest and your other hand on your belly at the level of your belly button.
- Notice how you're breathing: Which part of your body rises and falls as you breathe in and out? Now practice your relaxed breathing technique.

### Need more support or information?

If you'd like to develop your breathing and relaxation skills, or you'd like some support getting started, ask your local physio or find a physio at

[www.physiotherapy.org.nz](http://www.physiotherapy.org.nz)

This leaflet does not replace the benefits of a full assessment and programme provided by an expert physio.