

Breathing Exercise for Hot Flashes

Some evidence shows that paced breathing may help reduce menopausal hot flashes, including how often they occur and how severe they are.

Paced breathing is slow, deep, diaphragmatic breathing. With normal breathing, you take about 12 to 14 breaths a minute. By comparison, with paced breathing you take only 5 to 7 breaths a minute. The paced breaths are slow, smooth and deep enough to move your diaphragm (the muscular wall separating your lungs from your abdomen) as you take deeper breaths. The goal of paced breathing is to reduce the stress chemicals your brain produces and facilitate a relaxation response.



Breathing Technique

1. Sit in a quiet room in comfortable clothing, if possible. Don't lie down - you might fall asleep.
2. Inhale slowly and deeply through your nose for five seconds, then exhale slowly for 5 seconds. Focus on the air going in and out. When you inhale, breathe into the bottom part of your lungs (your upper lungs and chest will fill up automatically). Your belly should expand as you breathe in and contract as you breathe out.
3. When your mind wanders and distracting thoughts arise, let them pass and return your focus to your breath.
4. Repeat for 15 minutes in the morning and 15 minutes in the afternoon.

When you feel a hot flush coming on, use the same breathing technique to take 6-8 long, slow breaths over about a 2-minute period. This can help reduce flushing symptoms.

Paced breathing may also help lower blood pressure, decrease anxiety and promote relaxation.