Are You Breathing Right For Your Health?

Like blinking and your heartbeat, you don't really think about breathing; it just happens. But if you did pay it a little attention, you'd reap the health benefits.

The most important thing to know is that you need to be breathing through your nose most of the time. If you're breathing through your mouth, you're not:

- · Preventing foreign particles from entering your body
- · Humidifying the air you breathe
- Improving the oxygen circulation in your body

Breathing through your nose further enhances lung capacity, lowers the risk of allergies, supports the immune system and reduces the risk of sleep apnoea.

Mouth breathing is particularly detrimental for children, hampering facial and bone development, and the development of nasal cavities. As a child grows older, it can also result in crooked teeth. Later, mouth breathing can lead to snoring, problems with the airways, poor posture and waking through the night. It can also affect the oral microbiome, which plays a role in gut health.

Here are some tips for improving nasal breathing:

- If you wake up with a dry mouth, try using mouth strips at night.
- · Practise resting your tongue against the palate throughout the day.
- Focus on keeping your mouth closed unless you're eating, talking or exercising.
- Brush and floss regularly to maintain good oral health, and schedule regular visits to your dentist.

Get your body into the habit of nasal breathing with this simple exercise: sitting up straight, but comfortable, with one hand on the chest and one on the belly, breathe in and out slowly through the nose for a few minutes. Then continue breathing normally. You could also try alternate nostril breathing, breathing in through one nostril and out through the other, using your finger to close the opposite nostril.



