

# Natural Health News

October 2017

EVERGREEN SPA & WELLNESS  
ELY, MN

## THE HEALTH BENEFITS OF DEEP BREATHING



What if I told you that there was a way to decrease stress, ease anxiety, improve sleep and boost your mood—and you could do it anywhere, at any time? It is time to introduce breathing exercises into your daily routine. Although we all know how to breathe, using specific breathing techniques and breath control means that you are being mindful about the way you breathe in and out. By purposefully changing the way we breathe, we can change the way we feel and how our bodies react to what is going on around us. Under normal circumstances, we inhale to absorb oxygen and exhale to rid our body of carbon dioxide through the lungs, with the help of our diaphragm muscle. But when we are stressed, anxious or upset, the way we breathe changes. Instead of deep, lung-filling breaths, we start taking short, shallow breaths. Instead of our diaphragm doing the heavy lifting, we use our shoulders to inhale and exhale, which can make anxious feelings even worse. By using breathing exercises, we send a signal to our nervous system, the part of our body managing things like our heart rate and our stress response, that things are ok. In turn, the physical effects of anxiety—racing heartbeat, shallow breathing, sweaty palms—are reduced, and our minds calm down. Best of all, you can do breathing exercises when you are commuting to work, before a stressful meeting or even in the midst of an argument when you want to calm down. For people with high blood pressure, practicing breathing techniques for anxiety can help naturally lower blood pressure, reducing the risk of cardiovascular disease. A major study out of Japan showed evidence that deep breathing exercises are beneficial for reducing blood pressure. In a study of 21,563 subjects, researchers found that blood pressure was significantly lower after doing six rounds of deep breathing exercises for 30 seconds each time. In fact, breathing exercises are included in a 2013 recommendation made by the American Heart Association as an alternative beyond medicine and diet to controlling blood pressure. One study conducted among musicians discovered that when they practiced breathing techniques for a few minutes before performing, it had a positive impact on their heart rates and also left them feeling less anxious and tense. This means that just one session of slower breathing can have positive effects on anxiety. Breathing exercises also help ease stress and symptoms for people with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, or COPD. The feeling of not being able to take a deep breath is one of the earliest signs of the disease. As time goes on and the lungs aren't able to expel air, the diaphragm is not able to do its job and help bring in oxygen. So the body turns to other muscles, like the ones in the chest, back and even neck, to keep you breathing. One study even found that not only did breathing exercises help improve labored breathing, but quality of life and the lung's abilities to take in more oxygen increased as well. This is great news, because COPD is often treated with medication or expensive rehab programs. If you are lying in bed with thoughts racing and have run out of sheep to count, breathing exercises for sleep can help send you to dreamland. Slow, deep breathing actually helps the body override the sympathetic system, which controls our fight-or-flight response, and lets the parasympathetic system—which controls our ability to relax—take the wheel instead. When you practice deep breathing while in bed, you are giving the body permission to quit being on high alert and, instead, to relax. Focusing on your breathing also forces your mind to concentrate on the task at hand, and not on whatever you are lying in bed thinking about, which can often be enough to lull you to sleep. Activating the parasympathetic system directs your body away from the fight-or-flight response that flares up when we are stressed, and reminds it to chill out instead.

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### STORE HOURS:

Monday – Saturday  
9 am-5 pm  
CLOSED SUNDAYS

### SPA HOURS:

By Appointment



Performing breathing exercises will result in a slower heart rate and a greater sense of calm. Here are a few different types of breathing exercises to help you relax. 1. **Pursed lip breathing:** this one is simple and easy to do, but extremely effective. The general idea is to breathe out for double the amount of breaths you inhale. Pursed lip breathing helps release air that is trapped in the lungs, and decreases the amount of breaths you take, while extending exhalation. With relaxed shoulders, take a normal breath for about 2 counts. Then pucker your lips up (think of your mouth when you are about to whistle—that's what your lips should look like) and exhale for 4 counts. Do this for a few rounds. 2. **Diaphragmatic breathing:** also known as belly or abdominal breathing, trains the body to let your diaphragm do all the work. Your goal here is to breathe through your nose and focus on how your belly fills up with air. You can do this sitting up or lying down. With your shoulders back, keep one hand on your chest and the other on your belly. As you breathe in deeply for about 2 seconds, your belly should stick out a bit. Feel the air expanding your stomach and then breathe out slowly through the lips. 3. **Yoga breathing:** controlled breathing is a huge part of yoga practice. Alternate nostril breathing is great when you want to keep your mind from jumping around, like when you are stressed at work or trying to fall asleep, because you will need to focus to remember what nostril you are working on. To practice this, start on the right side. Place your right thumb over your right nostril as you breathe in through the left nostril. Then take your right ring finger and place it over your left nostril as you exhale from the right one. Leaving your ring finger where it is over the left nostril, inhale from the left, then switch to the right side, putting your thumb over the right nostril and exhaling through the left. This will definitely help you focus on the present. 4. **4-7-8 technique:** this simple breathing technique is lauded as one of the best ones to help you fall asleep. You exhale through your mouth and then close it and inhale through your nose for 4 counts. You hold the breath in for 7 counts, then release it in 8 counts, and repeat at least three times. Because you have 8 counts to get the breath out, you are forced to slow down your breathing which, in turn, slows down the heart rate and helps you relax. 5. **Breath counting:** this is another relaxation technique that will keep your mind from wandering too far. Sitting comfortably with your eyes closed, take a few deep breaths, then settle into a pattern of "normal" breathing. When you exhale, count "one." The next time, count "two." Do this until you have exhaled (and counted) to five, then start the pattern over. Don't count past five, and if you find you have lost count, start again at one. You will be surprised at how much concentration it will take to keep yourself on count. Breathing techniques are generally a safe, inexpensive way to strengthen your lungs, relax and decrease stress and anxiety. However, if you have COPD or another type of lung disease, you should consult with your doctor about incorporating breathing exercises into your lifestyle.

We are very excited to offer **MICROGREENS** from *Ely's Backyard Farm*. You will be able to find a variety of Bob's products in the produce section at Organic Roots. *Ely's Backyard Farm* is a small scale farm located in the front and backyards throughout Ely. Bob Cozzo, the owner, has a passion for growing fresh, chemical-free produce and a hatred for mowing lawns. He decided to combine the two in order to provide people with high quality fresh, and local produce grown right here in Ely. Keep up the great work, Bob!!



Organic Roots  Bistro

**BUSINESS HOURS:**

MONDAY through SATURDAY 9 AM—5 PM  
Closed Sunday

**SWEET POTATO COOKIES**

Place the following ingredients in a food processor: 1 cup cooked sweet potato, 1/2 cup butter (softened), 3/4 cup maple syrup, 1 egg, 1/2 tsp. sea salt, 1/2 tsp. ground cloves, 1/2 tsp. ground nutmeg, 1 tsp. cinnamon, 1 tsp. baking soda, and 2 cups sprouted grain flour. Process until well blended. Transfer to a bowl and fold in 1/2 cup raisins and 1/2 cup pecans (chopped). Form dough into walnut-sized balls and place on a buttered cookie sheet. Bake at 325 degrees for about 20 minutes. After 5 minutes in the oven, press cookies down lightly with a fork. Let cool completely before removing to an airtight container for storage. Yield: 18 cookies

Happy Halloween

