

Nadi Shodhana – Alternate Nostril Breathing

Nadi Shodhana is a deeply calming form of pranayama (yogic breathing practice) that works to balance the right and left hemispheres of the brain.

How to Practice

1. Choose a comfortable sitting position—either cross-legged on the floor (with a cushion or blanket to support the spine), or in a chair with your feet flat on the floor. Allow the spine to lengthen so that the back, neck, and head are erect throughout the practice. Gently close the eyes.
2. Begin by taking a full, deep inhalation followed by a slow, gentle exhalation. Repeat 2-3 more times to wake up the energetic body.
3. Draw your index and middle fingers together and rest them gently on your forehead between the eyebrows. You will alternately use the right thumb to close the right nostril and the right ring and pinky fingers (together) to close the left nostril.
4. Use the right thumb to close the right nostril. Exhale gently, but fully, through the left nostril. Keeping the right nostril closed, inhale through the left nostril and deep into the belly. Pause briefly at the top of the inhalation.
5. Next, use the ring and pinky fingers of the right hand to gently close the left nostril and simultaneously release the right nostril. Exhale through the right nostril, surrendering the breath down the right side of the body. Pause gently at the bottom of the exhalation.
6. Keeping the left nostril closed, inhale once again through the right nostril.
7. Then again, use the right thumb to close the right nostril as you release the left nostril. Exhale through the left nostril. Pause gently at the bottom of the exhalation.



This completes one round of nadi shodhana. The same pattern continues for each additional round: inhale through the left nostril, exhale through the right nostril, inhale through the right nostril, exhale through the left nostril.

Repeat this alternating pattern for several more rounds, focusing your awareness on the pathway of the breath—up one side of the body (from the pelvic floor to the crown of the head) and back down the other side of the body (from the crown of the head to the pelvic floor). Keep the breath slow, gentle, fluid, and relaxed throughout the practice.

Nadi shodhana can be immensely rewarding, even when practiced for as little as five minutes on a regular basis but practicing daily for ten to fifteen minutes offers even deeper benefits.

When you are ready to close your practice, complete your final round of nadi shodhana with an exhalation through the left nostril. Relax your right hand and place it comfortably in your lap as you take several deep breaths, and then allow your breath to return to normal.

There are many variations of nadi shodhana. Some more advanced techniques incorporate breath retention and specific duration ratios for the inhalation and exhalation. The above instructions are meant to provide a suitable introduction to nadi shodhana. Of course, it is always best to learn a new technique in person, from a qualified teacher.