

ALTERNATE NASAL BREATHING TECHNIQUE

In a healthy, well-balanced individual, breathing is emphasized in one nostril approximately every two hours. That is to say, the left nostril is more open than the right for about two hours and vice versa. This process alternates. In the vast majority of people, however, this alternation time varies due to living habits, improper diet, ill-health and lack of proper oxygen and prana.

Alternate nasal breathing helps maintain this equilibrium, biologically, and purifies the nadis, which are the channels that carry prana. It assists in bringing balance to each level of the body and mind. It balances the flow of the breath through the left and right nostrils or channels (ha-tha). Before doing this particular pranayama, be sure you have an understanding of the rhythm of diaphragmatic breathing so the breath flows steadily and slowly.

The alternate nasal breathing technique is one of the best practices for the purification of physical and/or emotional phlegm. One method of performing this technique is to use the shiva mudra described below to open and close the nasal passages.

SHIVA MUDRA:

- Take the index and middle finger of the right hand and fold them into your palm.
- Next place the thumb, little and ring fingers together, and slip the nose between the thumb and ring fingers.
- Now use the thumb to close off the right nasal passage and the little and ring fingers to close off the left nasal passage. Simply press lightly to close either passage.

Now you can begin alternate nasal breathing with a double exhalation through the open mouth (ha-haa!). Next, using the pincher notion of shiva mudra to alternately close each nostril, close off the right nasal passage and inhale through the left nasal passage. Now, closing off the left nasal passage, exhale completely and thoroughly through the right nasal passage. Immediately inhale again through the same nasal passage (the right nostril). Now exhale through the left nasal passage, inhale through the left nasal passage, exhale through the right nasal passage, and without stopping, continue this pattern of alternating the breath. Repeat this process for a cycle of three to twelve times.

If you begin this technique by first inhaling through the right nostril, you will activate and strengthen your *physical* body i.e., the prana predominately feeds the physical body. If you begin this technique by first inhaling through the left nostril, you will activate and strengthen your *astral body and/or the mind*.

In summary, when you wish to activate the physical body, begin with the right nostril as follows:

- Inhale: right nostril
- Exhale: left nostril
- Inhale: left nostril
- Exhale: right nostril
- Inhale: right nostril
- Exhale: left nostril
- Inhale: left nostril and continue this pattern

When you wish to activate the thinking process, begin with the left nostril as follows:

- Inhale: left nostril
- Exhale: right nostril
- Inhale: right nostril
- Exhale: left nostril
- Inhale: left nostril
- Exhale: right nostril
- Inhale: right nostril and continue this pattern.

Do this technique quietly and peacefully for a few minutes one to two times a day. It will have an enormous spiritual effect on your mind and on your life. As the nadis (channels) become purified, the body will be less restless and the mind will be quieter.

The secret of success here is to breathe deeply from the abdomen in order to get a deep inhalation. There should be a peaceful hold, and then a deep, quiet exhalation. There should be a delicate and comfortable breathing pattern associated with it. Sometimes you will find that this method works easily for you. Other times you will find it works less easily.