



## Alternate Nostril Breathing (aka Nadi Shodhana)

Your nose is exceptionally clever. Simply by practicing a few rounds of alternate nostril breathing (pranayama) for a few minutes each day, you can help restore imbalances in your brain – improve sleep – calm your emotional state – boost your thinking – calm your nervous system. How impressive is that!

Another interesting fact about your nostrils, is that you don't breathe through them equally all the time. Right now, you will be favoring either your left nostril or your right nostril.

### Left nostril for calming – right nostril for energy:

Your nose is directly linked to your brain and nervous system. For thousands of years the Indian yogis believe that many diseases are connected to disturbed nasal breathing.

Breathing in through your left nostril will access the right “feeling” hemisphere of your brain, and breathing in through your right nostril, will access the left “thinking” hemisphere of your brain. Consciously alternating your breath between either nostril will allow you to activate and access your whole brain.

### Yogic breathing, the perfect relaxation tool:

Alternate nostril breathing is one of the simplest and most user friendly relaxation techniques. It helps greatly to cool a busy mind and calm an overstimulated nervous system.

## Directions

1. Sit up comfortably with a straight spine

2. Close your right nostril with your right thumb and inhale through the left nostril to the slow count of 8. Pause for a second
3. Close the left nostril with your right ring finger, while you remove your thumb from your right nostril and exhale through the right nostril to the count of eight.
4. Inhale through the right nostril to the count of eight. Pause. Close the right nostril with your right thumb and exhale through the left nostril to the count of eight.

This is one round. Start by doing 4 or 5 rounds. You can build up to doing this for 5 or 10 minutes during the day.

Note: Don't do alternate nostril breathing if you have a cold or if your nasal passages are blocked--don't force.

## **12 benefits of alternate nostril breathing:**

### **1: Revitalizes you:**

A few rounds of alternate nostril breathing is a quick pick me up if you are feeling flat, tired or even stressed. It provides your body with a much needed dose of extra energy.

### **2: Improves brain function:**

When your mind is dull – concentration and clarity is poor. Alternate nostril breathing brings equal amounts of oxygen to both sides of the brain for improved brain function. Five minutes of alternate nostril breathing before an exam or interview is a great way to access your whole brain for improved performance.

### **3: Cleanses your lungs:**

A daily five minute practice morning and night of alternate nostril breathing is a great way to remove stale air and impurities from the bottom of your lungs.

Did you know 70% of our body's waste products are eliminated via our lungs.

### **4: Calms an agitated mind:**

I'm prone to worrying. A few minutes of focused alternate nostril breathing is helpful (for me) in calming my "over thinking" mind. The ancient yogis believe that if you can regulate your breath, then you can control your mind.

### **5: Merges the left "thinking" brain and right "feeling brain:**

Alternate nostril breathing optimizes both sides of your brain so you can access your whole brain, and all the benefits that go with it.

The flip side of course is, *single* nostril breathing can be used to activate, just the left "thinking" or just right "feeling" side of your brain for specific situations.

Try it out next time you need to drive your car. Cover your left nostril with your thumb and breathe only through your right nostril for one minute. This should keep you more alert when driving.

### **6: Encourage a calmer emotional state:**

In times of emotional distress and upset, a few rounds of mindful nostril breathing will soften the intensity of over reactive emotional states. The longer you practice, the more stable your thinking, and the calmer your emotions will become.

### **7: Improves sleep:**

If you can't sleep at night lay on your right hand side, gently close your right nostril with your right thumb and breath through your left nostril. This will activate your parasympathetic nervous system which will calm you down and slow your heart rate.

### **8: Great preparation for meditation:**

Alternate nostril breathing is a simple little trick that can be practiced for a few minutes before you begin your meditation practice. It's a very easy way to help you find your meditation groove.

### **9: Soothes your nervous system:**

By focusing on your breath and deepening it, your brain will register this message and trigger the parasympathetic nervous system. You have effectively switched your nervous system from a stressed response, into a relaxation response. Single left nostril breathing (by closing your right nostril) will direct the flow of oxygen

and energy to the right hemisphere of your brain, allowing once again, for the parasympathetic nervous system to be switched on. Gosh, your breath and nose is very clever.

### **10: Regulates the cooling and warming cycles of the body:**

Left nostril is feminine, nurturing, calm and cooling. Right nostril is masculine, heat, competitive and force. Favoring one nostril more than the other can effect the heat or coolness of your body.

### **11: Clears and boosts your energy channels:**

Slightly forced alternate nostril breathing improves and directs the flow of energy throughout your body – preventing sluggishness. It oxygenates your blood and allows the energy (prana) in your body to be strong and flowing.

### **12: Enhances rest and relaxation:**

A restless mind cannot relax. Alternate nostril breathing melts away any imbalances between the right and left hemisphere of your brain and calms your thinking. This is perfect for helping you access rest and relaxation far more efficiently.