



Many anxiety sufferers breathe too fast and shallow. When confronted with a feared scenario they breathe rapidly which leads to increased shortness of breath and further hyperventilation.

SOME SYMPTOMS OF HYPERVENTILATION

- Dizziness, Lightheadedness, Lump in the throat
- Fatigue, Poor concentration
- Choking sensation, Difficulty swallowing
- Racing heart, Shaking
- Blurred vision, Shortness of breath
- Chest pain, Disorientation
- Tingly sensations or numbness in the hands, feet and mouth

People who chronically breathe too fast tend to sigh often, take deep breaths and feel short of breath.

Slow breathing can relieve anxiety and prevent you from having a panic attack, if you do it as soon as you notice yourself over breathing or becoming anxious. Socially phobic and panicky people are advised to slow their breathing before tackling a feared situation or at any time they feel anxious.

When you are first learning this breathing relaxation exercise you may find it easiest to practice lying flat on your back, knees bent, feet flat on the floor and eight inches apart. Place one hand on your chest and one hand on your abdomen.

Hold your breath and count to 10

Then breathe out and think *relax to yourself*

Then inhale slowly through your nose for 3 seconds. The hand on your abdomen should rise whilst the hand on your chest should stay relatively still.

Then exhale through your mouth for three seconds, making a whooshing noise as you breathe out. Think "RELAX" as you exhale. The hand on your abdomen should fall as you exhale.

After a minute of breathing in and out in a six second cycle, hold your breath again for 10 seconds

Keep repeating this process for 5 minutes.

Once you feel you have mastered the technique lying down, then start practicing slow breathing whilst sitting or standing. Then you will be able to do slow breathing to relax yourself wherever you are in public.

Do this deep breathing for 20 minutes a day and any time when you feel yourself becoming anxious. Depending upon your commitments you might need to break up your 20 minutes during the day into 4 x 5 minutes' relaxation segments or 2 x 10-minute relaxation segments.