

## Alive and Well

by Rhoberta Shaler

As important as the quality and quantity of water that we drink is the quality and quantity of air we breathe. Yes, of course, we breathe every day, all day and, we do it automatically as well. To improve health, it is a good practice to include some periods of conscious deep breathing every day. This means stepping outside or to a window in suitable weather, and taking ten good deep breaths.

Now, what is a good breath? Some facts about breathing will help us practice advantageously. Our lungs are shaped like pears and so the larger capacity of the lungs is at the bottom. We then need to learn to fill the bottom of the lungs in order to truly re-oxygenate the body. Try it this way!

Put your hands on your back just above your waist with the fingers spread. Thumbs will be at your sides, middle fingers just touching at the spine. Inhale slowly and draw the air to the area where your hands are. If you are expanding the bottom of your lungs, your hands will automatically move apart at the spine. On the exhalation, the fingers will return to their original position, touching at the spine. This bellows-like action ensures that you take a full breath, reaching all areas of the lungs. This is an excellent way to take a quick relaxation break in a busy day, as well as an excellent revitalizing of the body.

Breathing well and deeply has many positive effects on the body and its systems. The lungs are directly concerned with the disposal of carbon dioxide in the venous blood and preventing ammonia, ketones, and other toxic substances from building up to unhealthy levels. The lungs need to be kept clean and free from bacterial diseases by efficient circulation of blood and lymph. Breathing fully helps by keeping the lungs pure and increasing the flow of fresh blood. The kidneys and liver are stimulated to work more efficiently by conscious breathing techniques. Clean blood tones the nerves, brain, spinal cord and heart muscles, thus maintaining their efficiency.

What a lot of benefits from the simple exercise of paying conscious attention to the quality and quantity of air we breathe!

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