

RELAXATION MATTERS

Deep Diaphragmatic Breathing

RETHINKING
PAIN
COMMUNITY-BASED
PAIN SUPPORT

There are a number of relaxation techniques you can try to support your pain management. Deep diaphragmatic breathing is one option. It is a relaxation exercise which focuses on taking slow, deep breaths using the diaphragm (the long flat muscle at the bottom of your rib cage that separates your chest and abdomen).

Expecting to practise breathing techniques is important, as people find these kind of relaxation techniques help more when they've been doing them for a while. It's best to start practising diaphragmatic breathing when you're feeling relatively calm and relaxed. Once you're used to doing it, you'll find this breathing technique can help with managing pain, unhelpful emotions and feelings of anxiety and stress. Depending on how you are feeling, you can try these exercises once a day or three times a week, or if you're feeling pressured, stressed or anxious, you might want to repeat the exercise two to three times a day.

How to do diaphragmatic breathing

- 1 Find a quiet, comfortable place at a time that you're not likely to be disturbed for 3 to 5 minutes.
- 2 You can do this seated or you can lie down. Be comfortable but try and make sure your back is straight.
- 3 Lie one hand on your chest and the other on your stomach.
- 4 Close your eyes and begin to think about your breathing, focusing on breathing in through your nose and out through your mouth, in a regular rhythm.
- 5 As you breathe in gently through your nose, imagine that you're a balloon gently filling with air. Notice your stomach moving slightly outwards.
- 6 When you breathe out through your mouth, let the air out slowly, imagine the balloon deflating and that you are letting go of any tension. Notice your stomach moving slightly inwards.
- 7 You may now begin to count as you breathe in and out. Breathe in for a count of 3 and out for a count of 4 to 5 (so your out breath is longer).
- 8 Continue to do this until you feel more relaxed or calmer.

For guided support on relaxation techniques, visit the Relaxation Matters section on our website:
<https://rethinkingpain.org/relaxation-matters/>



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