



Diaphragmatic (belly) Breathing

Your brain and your stomach are constantly talking to each other through a nerve called the **vagus nerve**.

- When you're **calm**, your stomach works smoothly and digestion is easy.
- When you're **stressed, rushed, worried or overwhelmed**, your stomach slows down.

This is why reflux or regurgitation can get worse on stressful days, even if you haven't eaten anything unusual.

You can calm your stomach by calming your body and one of the best tools for this is **diaphragmatic (belly) breathing**.

Diaphragmatic (belly) breathing helps your brain tell your body: "You're safe. You can relax and digest now."

It also lowers pressure in your stomach and helps the lower oesophageal sphincter (the "door" at the top of your stomach) stay closed.

Most people do not realise that how they breathe can change how their body feels. We breathe all day without thinking about it, but we can also **control** our breathing to help our body relax.

There are two main ways of breathing:

1. Chest Breathing

- Happens during stress, panic, exercise or "fight-or-flight" moments.
- It's fast and shallow.

2. Diaphragmatic (belly) Breathing

- Your tummy rises and falls when you breathe.
- Happens naturally when you sleep or when babies breathe.
- Helps your body relax, digest food, and calm down.

Belly breathing can also help the muscles involved in rumination relax, it reduces stress and gives you something to focus on during difficult moments.

How To Do Belly Breathing (Step-by-Step)

Try to find a quiet spot where you can spend around **15 minutes** to practice.

1. Get Set Up

- Lie on your back with a comfy pillow under your head.
- Relax your body and shoulders.
- Bend your knees (you can put another pillow under them if that is more comfortable).
- Put **one hand on your chest** and the **other on your stomach**.

2. Check Your Breathing

Breathe normally and notice which hand moves.

- If the **chest hand** moves → you're chest breathing.
- If the **tummy hand** moves → you're belly breathing.

3. Start Belly Breathing

- Breathe in slowly through your **nose** for about **three seconds**.
- Try to push your tummy out so the **hand on your stomach rises**.
- The hand on your chest should stay still (this takes practice).

4. Breathe Out Slowly

- Breathe out through **pursed lips** (like blowing through a straw) for **three seconds**.
- Your stomach should fall.

5. **Aim for six to eight slow breaths per minute** take your time. Slow, steady breathing is the goal.

6. **When you're good at it** you can do this sitting or standing too.

When Should I Use Belly Breathing?

Try doing this:

- **Halfway through your meals**
- **After a meal:** three times, for five minutes each, with 10-minute breaks in between
- **After an episode of regurgitation or vomiting or reflux**

At first, this might feel strange or tiring and that's totally normal. Your body is learning a new habit. The more you practice, the easier and more natural it will feel.

You can use belly breathing to **stop or reduce vomiting episodes** when you feel them coming.

Helpful Tools

There are free apps (like **Biofeedback Meditation**) that let you place your phone on your tummy. They track the rise and fall to help you check if you're doing the breathing correctly and at the right speed.

A Reminder

Re-training how you breathe takes time. It won't fix things overnight.

But if you keep practising, belly breathing can make a **big difference** to your symptoms and how you feel day-to-day.

Stick with it, you're helping your body learn a healthier, calmer way to work.