

B R E A T H T A K I N G

Breathing to Increase Lung Capacity

Lung function is your body's ability to oxygenate and remove carbon dioxide from your blood, lung capacity refers to the maximum amount of air your lungs can hold, and maximal oxygen uptake is the maximum amount of oxygen your body is able to use. You can improve lung health by increasing your capacity and training your body to use oxygen more efficiently.

One of the best ways to increase lung capacity is through cardiovascular exercise, but there are other techniques that can be used toward this goal. For individuals managing respiratory conditions, such as asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), expanding lung capacity is an important endeavor!

The American Lung Association recommends the following two breathing exercises. They can “help rid the lungs of accumulated stale air, increase oxygen levels, and get the diaphragm to return to its job of helping you breathe.”

PURSED LIP BREATHING

- 1.** Keeping your body straight, breathe in through your nose.
Keep track of how many seconds you inhale.
- 2.** Purse your lips and exhale, taking at least twice as long to breathe out as you did to breathe in.
- 3.** For example, if you took five seconds to breathe in, try to stretch your exhale to 10 seconds.

BELLY OR DIAPHRAGMIC BREATHING

- 1.** While lying on your back, place your hands or something light (like a tissue box) on your stomach.
- 2.** Breathe in through your nose, focusing on raising your belly (and thus your hands / tissue box).
- 3.** Exhale through pursed lips, trying to take two to three times as many seconds to breath out that you did to breathe in.