

Yoga for Asthma and Allergies

*“Pranayama (breathing) is 100 times more powerful than asana (postures)”
- Swami Kripalu*

Causes & Triggers

1. Allergens such as animal dander, dust mites, mold, pollen, smoke, chemicals, foods, drugs
2. Respiratory infections
3. Weather changes and exposure to cold
4. Exercise
5. Dehydration
6. Fatigue
7. Rushing
8. Poor posture
9. Stress, especially emotional
10. Breathing patterns/habits:
 - Chest breathing
 - Shallow breathing
 - Over-breathing
 - Breath holding
 - Reverse breathing
 - Mouth breathing

How to Check for Poor Breathing Habits

While lying on your back or sitting, check for:

Chest Breathing	One hand on chest, one on belly. Which one moves?
Shallow Breathing	Hands on ribs. Do they expand outward and inward with the breath?
Over Breathing	Is exhalation longer than inhalation?
Breath Holding	Pay attention to the transition from inhale to exhale. Is there breath holding?
Reverse Breathing	Does your belly expand with the inhale or the exhale?
Mouth Breathing	Do you breathe through your nose or your mouth?

Prevention and Healing

1. Cultivate the relaxation response with gentle yoga / meditation / yoga nidra
2. Re-train breathing patterns, emphasizing the exhale
3. Use a Neti Pot daily
4. Nutrition – eat a healthy, organic, inflammation reducing diet, minimize refined sugar, processed foods, dairy products, and cold drinks
5. Breathe through your nose
6. Get adequate rest (10pm – 6 am), rising and moving with ease
7. Reduce stimulation: rushing, over-work, urgency, stress
8. Know your triggers and avoid them
9. Practice yoga asanas (postures) to open the heart and lungs and clear the sinuses: cobra, camel, warrior I, triangle, half moon, lateral angle, pigeon, yoga mudra arms, and all forward folds to encourage deep exhalations. Sun salutations will support overall strength and fluidity.

Breathing Techniques

Deep Relaxation	Shavasana or Yoga Nidra, using 3-part yogic breath (Dirgha)
The Wave	Only the small of the back moves <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inhale – up • Exhale - down
Complete Breath	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make the inhale and exhale even • Shorten the inhale / lengthen the exhale, building to twice as long. Avoid forcing.
Shorten both breaths & pause after exhalation	Continue to extend the pause. This regulates CO2 levels and can turn an asthma attack around if done early
Avoid rapid breathing, and strong Ujjayi (ocean-sounding breath)	Instead use 3-part yogic breath and only gentle Ujjayi