

Functional and Dysfunctional Breathing Patterns

Is your breathing impacting your health? Breathing functionally is not as simple or easy as it may seem. Despite the fact that we breathe automatically, taking over 24,000 breaths each and every day, conditioning influences the way we breathe, and those habits may fail to support our mental, emotional and physical health and well being! Several factors contribute to dysfunctional breathing:

- **Biomechanical factors:** poor posture, scoliosis (abnormal curvature of the spine), deviated septum, nasal polyps, enlarged adenoid tissue, asthma, bronchitis, emphysema, COPD, chronic pain, restrictive clothing
- **Biochemical factors:** fever, elevated progesterone levels (fluctuating hormonal levels), pregnancy, pneumonia, asthma, allergies (airborne, food, skin, chemical), diabetes, liver, lung, kidney and heart disease, anemia, hypoglycemia, seizures (epileptic, grand mal), smoking, caffeine, nicotine, aspirin, amphetamines, sugar, chronic pain
- **Environmental factors:** high altitude, weather patterns and pressure systems, temperature
- **Neurological factors:** conditioning of brain respiratory centers and fear centers (amygdala), nervous system balance (vagus nerve)
- **Psychosocial factors:** anxiety, fear, trauma, worry, depression, separation, divorce, loneliness, isolation, unemployment, poverty, chronic pain

Do you experience any of the following signs and symptoms related to improper breathing?

- Elevated or erratic heart rate
- Heart palpitations
- Elevated or erratic blood pressure
- Dizziness, vertigo, light-headedness or spaced out feeling
- Shortness of breath (without exertion)
- Difficulty catching your breath
- Frequent sighing or wheezing
- Catching yourself not breathing
- Chronic cough
- Chronic mouth breathing, snoring, sleep apnea (waking to breathe)
- Sensation of lump in throat or chest
- Tightness in the chest
- Sensation of a band across the chest
- Stitching or stabbing sensation in the ribs or pain in the sides
- Tenderness of the chest wall
- Chronic muscle tension and/or muscle spasms or tremors
- Insomnia, poor sleep, waking tired and exhausted
- Snoring
- Waking from sleep not breathing
- Chronic sinusitis, recurrent colds, allergies
- Poor memory and difficulty concentrating
- Headaches and migraines
- Numbness and tingling in face or lips
- TMJ or tightness in the jaw, lips or tongue
- Cold hands and feet/Raynaud's syndrome
- Fatigue
- Drowsiness while driving, in warm room, in a meeting
- Sexual dysfunction
- Constipation
- Ulcerative colitis, irritable bowel syndrome

Nijmegen Questionnaire

This simple questionnaire can help determine if your breathing pattern is affecting your health. By some estimates, approximately 4 – 10% of the general population suffer from chronic hyperventilation syndrome, yet some medical authorities believe that this estimate is significantly low and under reported, possibly because it is greatly misunderstood. Regardless of your score, breathing influences the state and balance of your nervous system, so mindfulness training, breath work and biofeedback may still be beneficial for you. The Nijmegen questionnaire is considered to be 91% accurate for detecting chronic hyperventilation syndrome. Simply check the appropriate box that best represents the frequency with which you experience the symptoms listed.

	Never 0	Rare 1	Sometimes 2	Often 3	Very Often 4
Chest pain					
Feeling tense					
Blurred vision					
Dizzy spells					
Feeling confused					
Faster or deeper breathing					
Short of breath					
Tight feeling in stomach					
Bloated feeling in stomach					
Tingling in fingers					
Unable to breathe deeply					
Tight feeling around the mouth					
Cold hands and feet					
Palpitations					
Feelings of anxiety					

Total Points: _____

A score greater than 23 may suggest chronic hyperventilation syndrome.
 Want to know more? Contact The BreathSPACE today at www.thebreathspace.com