

Please read my [Disclaimer](#)

## Asthma

I do not suffer from asthma myself but wheeze during the hay fever season. I started to compile this page in the autumn for someone I met after I had [chest and head congestion](#) in the summer. Not surprisingly, some of the remedies are the same. Others seemed to be especially tailored to asthma. You need to be aware that breathlessness can sometimes be due to heart problems and should consult a doctor.

### Breathing practices

It should be noted that there are numerous breathing practices and therapies designed for different outcomes. Not all of them are safe, especially for those with breathing problems and hypertension. This video on Breathing <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NIhmcUf9cUc&t=222s> covers Western and Eastern thoughts on breathing.

- **Buteyko Breathing Method (BBM)** - in a British TV documentary, several people claimed that this method had helped them manage their asthma. The theory is that asthma is due to a deficit of carbon dioxide rather than oxygen. If there is insufficient carbon dioxide, oxygen is bound to the haemoglobin of the blood. This leads to oxygen deficiency in the tissues of the brain, heart, kidneys and other organs. Biochemistry texts tell us that when the body is short of carbon dioxide, its acid-base balance is upset and alkalosis sets in. This can cause spasms in various parts of the body, including the brain and chest muscles involved in breathing, and increase the pulse rate. The kidneys will try to correct the alkalosis by eliminating bicarbonate, along with phosphorus and magnesium, causing other deficiency diseases.

Professor Buteyko devised a breathing method to increase the carbon dioxide in blood. His [Control Pause](#) (CP), is the length of time that you can comfortably hold the breath after exhalation. He found that by increasing the CP, asthmatics could lower their blood pressure and asthma symptoms. This was demonstrated on TV (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/153320.stm>). Despite the lack of enthusiasm from the medical profession, sufferers claim that this method has given them better control of their asthma (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/2805039.stm>). Here is a demonstration of how to relax by slowing down the breathing. [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_UaA\\_Xz9Ba4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_UaA_Xz9Ba4). Notice the emphasis on keeping the mouth closed. Clinical trials show that BBM may be effective in improving the quality of life and reducing the intake of inhaled medication in patients with asthma <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/11059522>.

You can easily check the [acid-base](#) balance of your body by using a dipstick to measure the pH of your urine. If your body is acidic, rather than alkaline as assumed by Buteyko, then you can correct this again by varying your breathing to take in more oxygen or by having alkalising drinks (see below). Buteyko also advised patients that :

- Asthmatics should not attempt to control how they breathe, and should not take deep breaths.
- Take shallow breaths and try to lengthen the Control Pause without straining yourself. You should just time when you breathe out and then when you start breathing in again and NOT watch the clock.
- Sleep on left side - not on your back.
- Breathe through the nose - if necessary, tape the mouth when you go to sleep. [http://www.earthclinic.com/CURES/breathing\\_cures.html](http://www.earthclinic.com/CURES/breathing_cures.html)

Buteyko teachers warn that *the rules discovered by K.P. Buteyko prove that direct control of respiratory movements (inhale/exhale/pause amplitude and/or duration) is extremely dangerous. This means that almost all known methods of "respiratory gymnastics" have nothing to do with the Buteyko Method and may turn to be quite hazardous. The Buteyko Method reduces breathing only by means of relaxation.* Sometimes the Buteyko Method is thought of as "the breath-holding technique". In actual fact, the Buteyko Method uses breath-holding only for special purposes so, as to produce the minimum impact on correction of breathing. <http://thebreathingman.wordpress.com/article/the-first-hand-buteyko-method-202i29i90v7sn-66/> Relaxation may be how Reiki and other healing therapies help the body to reset itself.

- **Tai Chi**

The slow flowing movements of Tai Chi induce slow rhythmic breathing. Someone I knew was suffering from chronic fatigue and severe allergies requiring hospitalisation. She was hyperventilating and was unable to get a good night's sleep. I showed her a few Qi Gong exercises to slow down and control the breathing, to open up the chest, and lengthen and deepen the breath without straining. It is the exercises which slow down and moderate the breathing - not those which attempt to directly alter the breathing. She started to sleep better, gained more control of her breath and bought a DVD to teach herself Tai Chi.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JHQmY2sLhbl>

- **Pranayama**

Medical researchers also investigating the benefits of Pranayama (Yoga focused on the breath) for asthma. <https://www.taoisttaichi.org/asthma/> Comparison of the effects of Buteyko and pranayama breathing techniques on quality of life in patients with asthma – a randomized controlled trial <http://eprints.manipal.edu/138112/1/clinical%20rehab.pdf> concluded that the Buteyko method was more effective. However, it must be noted that Pranayama includes various breathing techniques to achieve different outcomes – the above study does not describe the specific breathing techniques they tested.

- **Alexander Technique** – I have not practised this. In 1908, Alexander (of Alexander Technique fame), said that normal breathing was what happened when we observe our breathing rather than try to breathe. He had already taught that forced deep breathing was detrimental to posture and health since it tenses the muscles. Instead, he taught the "Whispered Ah" method. [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_n2kdZCR5iQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_n2kdZCR5iQ) which focuses instead on exhalation through the mouth and observing the spontaneous inhalation which follows. You automatically breathe deeper but without effort. You should let the exhalation complete and not be in a hurry to breathe in. The whole aim is to release the tension in all the muscles of the torso by just mindful observation of how your body moves. This leads to relaxation, especially when practised in the [semi-supine position](#). This technique is similar to the Ujjayi breath in Pranayama.

- **Steam/nasal inhalation and rubs** to open up the respiratory passages. Boiling water is poured into a basin, to which some herbal extract is added. Thyme, eucalyptus, Menthol and Olbas and similar oils may be used. These oils may also be sniffed from a handkerchief when needed. Such herbal and camphorated oils were widely used by Asians when I was a child. They too are anti-inflammatory and help to relax the muscles.

- **Salt pipes**

I have seen these advertised on the internet but have no personal experience of them. This is a variation of steam inhalation but involves the use of rock salt. Google **salt pipes** for more

information.

- **Hot packs** You can also rub these oils (or Vicks Vapor Rub) on the chest where there is pain and put a hot water bottle or hot linseed pack on it to increase its effectiveness. More information and links on linseed packs are under [chest and head congestion](#).
- **Epsom Salt** - like the Buteyko theory, some biochemists believe that many chronic diseases are caused by acid-alkaline imbalance caused by illness, faulty diet etc. Whereas the Buteyko theory stresses the importance of carbon dioxide to release oxygen to the tissues, others such as Stephanie Seneff believe that magnesium and sulphates are necessary for good health. Epsom Salt (magnesium sulphate) is a muscle relaxant. You can have Epsom Salt baths or footbaths as people used to do in the past and also take a few grains dissolved in a little hot tea first thing in the morning.

### **Oral Treatments**

- **Traditional Chinese Medicine** is reported to be good at treating asthma and eczema with herbs.
- **Herbs in food**  
The Chinese and Indians have traditionally used honey, licorice, ginger, cinnamon and fenugreek to improve lung function. Europeans have placed great emphasis on thyme and mucilaginous plants, like linseed, slippery elm and marshmallow. Some of these food cures have side effects when taken in medicinal doses. Use these in your cooking or make teas with them. Recipe for ginger tea for chest congestion/gastritis is at [chest and head congestion](#). **Linseed tea** seems to loosen mucus and is worth a try over some months. Information and recipe are also at: [chest and head congestion](#).
- **Onion syrup** Several books state that teaspoons of this will ease an asthma attack. Place thin slices of red onions on a plate and cover with honey. Cover with an inverted plate and leave to steep overnight. Tea spoon sips of the syrup is taken 4 times daily.
- **Alkalisng drink** - Information and recipe can be found at [chest and head congestion](#). But, you need to check your urine pH before taking this. A similar rejuvenating drink is taken by athletes to enhance performance. Take a dilute version to begin with and monitor your breathing and urine pH response. The main ingredient is [bicarbonate of soda](#), which is a wonder drug.
- **Biochemic Tissue Salt**  
Naturopaths recommend **Nat Sulph**. I used to take New Era Tissue Salts and they were excellent but are no longer available. There are other well established brands, like Nelsons and Weleda.
- **Coriander leaves or cilantro – this is** claimed to remove phlegm.  
<http://earthclinic.com/CURES/lungs.html>

**Some helpful sites** - under construction. I am trying to track down clinical trials on the above so that you can assess whether it is worth your while trying them out.

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