

Breathing Exercises for Voice (and body, brain and soul)

Stop any of these exercises if they make you dizzy, more short of breath, or make you cough, and speak with your primary care practitioner

Diaphragmatic Breathing: Lying down, standing or sitting

1. Lie on your back with knees bent and the bottoms of your feet resting on the bed, or stand or sit upright
2. Place one hand on your chest, and the other hand on top of your stomach or around the side of your stomach.
3. Close your lips and gently place your tongue on the roof of your mouth.
4. Breathe in through your nose, slowly pulling air down into your stomach for **4 seconds**, trying to spread your fingers apart with your breath (if 4 is too much, try 3 or 2 as long as you are breathing into your belly).
5. **Slowly** exhale your breath through your nose – try make this last for **4 seconds** (again, if 4 is too much, try 3 or 2).

Practice this any time, beginning with one minute and increasing to two if you can

Humming

Humming while exhaling is calming and soothing, and supports good breathing patterns. You can do this in any position, including lying down while you're practicing your diaphragmatic breathing.

1. Place your hands around the sides of your stomach.
2. With your lips closed, breathe in through your nose and pull air down into your stomach where your hands are. Try to spread your fingers apart with your breath.
3. Keep your lips closed and exhale while humming, making the “hmmmmmm” sound. **Try to make your lips vibrate.** Notice how your hands lower back down.
4. Again, inhale through your nose, then exhale through your nose while humming.
5. Repeat for one minute (less if it makes you short of breath).

Relaxation Exercises for Voice (neck, jaw, throat)

Head tilt (check with your doctor first if you have neck or back issues)

1. Lie on your back on a firm surface.
2. Place your right hand over top of your head and slightly pull your head toward your right shoulder (tilting, not turning, your head). Bring your ear as close as you can to your shoulder without it hurting.
3. Repeat on the left. Bring left ear to left shoulder, using the left hand over top of your head.
4. Do this 5 times on each side.

If you have no neck or back issues you can also incorporate the neck stretches you've learned in gentle yoga

Yawn-sigh

Keeping your tongue in a relaxed position, pretend to yawn – mouth open wide, soft palate raised, tongue low, stretching and widening at the back of your throat. Sigh your breath out silently (even better if this triggers an actual yawn). Repeat 5 times.

Closed yawn

Try yawning with your lips closed, raising your soft palate and feeling the stretch in the muscles of your mouth and throat. Repeat 5 times

Jaw muscle rub

Let your jaw drop slightly. Place the heels of your hands just under your cheekbones and firmly rub the muscles of your cheeks - at the same time, let the lower jaw drop into an open, relaxed position. Repeat 3 times.

Jaw release

Let your mouth and jaw hang open loosely, with your tongue sitting in a relaxed position in your mouth. Hold for 30 seconds

Again – if your voice is not improving and is interfering with communication, speak with your family physician.