

Pranayama Level 2

Before you start the exercises it is recommended to practice the warm ups described in level 1 and 2-3 minutes of alternative nostril breathing (Nadi Shodhana). After this practice maximal two other Pranayamas. You master an exercise, if you are able to do it for minimum of ten minutes without being exhausted. Only after that you allowed to go on a higher level or apply Bandhas. If you suffer from headache, nausea or other uncomfortable feeling, stop the practice immediately, lie down and breathe slow and deep. Take a rest and go on with the practice the next day. Never skip Savasana, the final relaxation.

Bandha:

Bandhas are energetic locks that contain the Prana in the torso and concentrate it in the three main energy channels (Nadis) of the body. The belly is like a battery that conserves energy. We need this energy to start the engine (for body actions), which again loads this battery, like a running car loads its battery.

There are three main Bandhas:

1. Mula Bandha - root lock
activating the perineum muscle (the one that stops peeing) and pull it slightly inward.
2. Uddiyana Bandha – “Upward flying”
Empty the lungs; pull the navel in towards the spine and slightly up.
3. Jalandhara Bandha - chin lock
bring the chin down towards the collar bones, locking the throat.

Breathing exercises

Some of the following exercises can produce strong physical and psychological reactions. Therefore practice slow and careful. Don't suppress any feelings if emotional blockades are opened. You are ready for them. Important is to recognize them. Stop the exercises, analyze and deal with your feelings and then – eventual in a meditation – let them go.

1. Pratiloma Krama:

Pratiloma is a combination of Anuloma and Viloma Krama (see manual level 1).

Inhale, count 2
Hold, count 2
Continue inhale, count 2
Hold, count 2
Continue inhale, count 2
(go on until the lungs are full)

Exhale, count 2
Hold, count 2
Continue exhale, count 2
Hold, count 2
Continue exhale, count 2
(go on until the lungs are empty)

This Pranayama demands a high level of concentration. It improves the quality of inhalation as well as the quality of the exhalation.

2. Nadi Shodhana with Kumbhaka¹

The breathing is on one hand an unconscious, automatic organic activity. On the other hand it can be dominated and controlled by the will. If you hold the breath a conflict arises between the will and the instinct. The CO₂-level rises, the oxygen level sinks. The longer I can control the mechanism with my will the longer I can control myself mentally.

A average person can hold the breath for 25-75 seconds. The time is not depending on the last breath but on the oxygen level in the blood. Most of the oxygen is transported in the blood, so the level depends on the number and kind of breaths done before the breath holding.

All phases of the breathing have to be under control. It should not be stopped in a hard or jagged way but be soft and easy. Same when you start to breathe again. If this is not under control you have gone too far and should work in smaller ratios.

An advanced yogi can move the energy by will into the places where he wants it to be. With the Pranayama exercises we can increase the amount of Prana in the body, hold it in certain areas with Bandhas and intensify the exchange in the tissue. The moment you stop the breathing, Prana is set free in the body and moves into the whole organism. Breath holds stimulate the cell breathing. This way it produces inside warmth, the body temperature rises and the organism is deeply activated.

We differ between:

outer breathing which is the exchange of gases in the lungs and

inner breathing: cell breathing. Every cell absorbs oxygen, when it gets in touch with it. The oxidation produces energy.

The duration of a breath hold sets different effects in the body.

¹ Kumbhaka = Breath holding

3-20 seconds of breath holding:

During this time the air is better “digested”. It stays longer in the lungs and there is more time for the gases to exchange. More oxygen is taken in, more CO₂ moves out.

20-90 seconds of breath holding:

In this time you can experience a stronger reaction. The body doesn't get energy anymore from the breathing so it takes the sugar in the cells. The CO₂ level rises and the body gets heated up, because it's not longer cooled by the lungs.

90 or more seconds of breath holding:

After 1½ minutes you can experience ecstatic state. The body rejuvenates and physiological changes take place. The spleen is activated, which contracts and produces more red blood cells.

The alternate nostril breathing (Nadi Shodhana) can be done in the classical ratio of 4-16-8. It's used to learn controlling in- and exhalation.

Prelude: exhale left, close right nostril with thumb.



Inhale left, (count 4)

Hold the breath, close the nose with Vishnu Mudra (count 16)

Exhale right, left nostril is closed with ring and small finger (count 8)

Inhale right (count 4)

Hold the breath, close the nose with Vishnu Mudra (count 16)

Exhale left, right nostril is closed with thumb (count 8) (1 round)

Inhale left and so on ...

Start with 5 rounds and increase up to 20 rounds. A strict rhythm is important, more than the duration of the exercise.

If you feel, you are running out of air and have problems to keep the rhythm easy, especially the exhalation, reduce the counting to 3-12-6. Later on you can increase to 5-20-10. It's also possible to start with a shorter breath hold, like 8 and slowly learn to increase it to 16. Find out what your body is comfortable with and able to do. Do not force anything. On an advanced level all three Bandhas can be applied while holding the breath.

3. Shitali and Shidkari

Shitali is performed by sticking the tongue out between the lips and curling it into a straw. Inhalation is followed by retention and then exhalation takes place through both nostrils.

*Inhale through the curled tongue and lift the head
Hold the breath, roll tongue back and press the tip against the roof of the mouth
Move chin towards the chest and perform Jalandhara Bandha
Exhale through the nose (1 round)*

Perform 5-20 rounds.

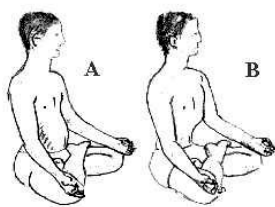
Shidkari

Some people cannot put their tongue in a “U” shape (genetic factor), therefore Shitkari is recommended. In this Pranayama you roll the top of your tongue back and hold it with the upper teeth. The mouth stays open and the air can flow in at the sides of the tongue. Through this the sides are more activated, while in Shitali the central nerve of the tongue has more stimulation.

Both Pranayama cool the body and they can be used to get light fever down. It enhance the sense of taste, helps the digestion by stimulating the production of saliva and gastric fluid. It's said, that these exercises gives a beautiful expression of the face.

5. Bhastrika + Kapalabhati

This breathing practice is described as mimicking the action of a bellows (= Bhastrika) blowing on a fire. As the name suggests, it consists of a series of rapid inhalations and exhalations. The exhalations are made by forcefully contracting the upper abdominal muscles and pushing air out of the lungs. The inhalations is even forceful. Bhastrika is very heating and is not for those with weak constitutions or eye, ear or blood pressure pathology. It is expanding the lungs, eliminate toxins and augment the blood circulation. It trains the breathing muscles and cleans the sinuses and the nose, special if you close one nostril and blow out only through one side. Don't do this if you suffer from a cold or blockade of the sinuses.



*Close your eyes
Inhale and exhale 8-10 times fast and forceful, end with exhalation.
Hold the breath for 10-15 sec. (1 round)*

Do 3 to 5 rounds and always rest after that in Savasana.

The cleaning technique **Kapalabhati** (means light skull) is often introduced as a Pranayama. The difference to Bhastrika lies in the passive inhalation. It's a milder form of exercises than Bhastrika. Only the exhalation is forceful and active. The inhalations are made by releasing the contracted muscles and allowing the breath to passively flow into the lungs.

Kapalabhati can be practiced in a standing position to clean the digesting system. For this you bend slightly the knees and rest your hands on your knees. Then you exhale forcefully and let the air passively pass in.

Do the Kapalabhati up to 20 times, followed by 1 minute breath hold. You can increase up to 30 and 40 times, then try to hold the breath 2 minutes.

“Hyperventilations” like Kapalabhati und Bhastrika lower the CO₂-level in the body. To balance this they should always be followed by a breath hold. Do NOT practice these exercises just before going free diving! Use it only for training purposes.

These exercises activate liver, pancreas and the digesting system. They refresh the brain and vitalize the whole body. But they also can be very exhausting. Lungs and heard may be strained. Practice with care and stop immediately when you feel nausea or any discomfort feeling and take a rest. Rarely it happens that suppressed feelings emerge. Then stop, recognize your feelings and rest the body.

6. Advanced Nadi Shodhana

In the advanced form all parts of the breathing are hold for the same time. Start with a low ratio and increase slowly when you master a ratio for 5-10 minutes without feeling exhausted or short of breath.

Exhale left, close right nostril with the thumb.

*Inhale left nostril, count 5,
Close both nostrils with Vishnu Mudra,
hold and count 5,
Exhale though right nostril, count 5,
Inhale through the right nostril, count 5,
Close both nostrils with Vishnu Mudra
hold and count 5.*

Exhale though left nostril, count 5 (1 round).

Start with 5 rounds and increase slowly to 10. After mastering this that you can increase the ratios to 6 and more. When you are able to do to the exercise with 12 counts you can start to increase the times of breath holding like the following chart shows:

<i>Exhale/Inhale</i>	<i>Hold</i>
12	12
12	18
12	24
12	30