

"The practice of asana is not merely a type of physical exercise, although one can derive much physical benefit from doing them. In doing asana practice, the body movement should be slow and conscious, in harmony with a slow inhalation and slow exhalation. The more slowly one lifts an arm, the more one becomes aware of the movement and strength it requires. In the same way, the more slowly one breathes, the more one becomes aware of the movement of the breath. Combining this awareness of body movement with awareness of deliberate, rhythmical breath, allows for a synthesis of body, breath, and mind, which is the essence of all Yoga practice."

--Baba Hari Dass (Hindu Monk, Mount Madonna Center)

Breath Forms:

Full yogic breath

The yogic breath is a complete inhalation and exhalation which maximizes the volume of air that is brought into the lungs. The inhalation of the yogic breath is divided into two parts, each roughly equal in length. In the first part, the abdomen goes out as you begin to inhale through the nostrils.

During the second part of the inhalation, the upper chest expands as the inhalation is completed and the abdomen moves inward slightly as a result.

In this manner, the lungs are filled from the bottom upwards. During the exhalation, first the chest relaxes, then the abdomen relaxes outward.

Finally the abdomen is pulled inward to expel the last of the breath.

Ujjayi (Victorious breath) Chest breath

Close the mouth, draw the lower abdomen toward the spine, and inhale through both nostrils, drawing the air across the throat, by slightly closing the glottis. As the air passes through the flattened glottis, a soft breathing or rubbing sound is made in the throat. (Sometimes likened to a Darth Vader breath). Ujjayi has a heating effect, removes phlegm in the throat, increases appetite, and is helpful for cough and fever. It is also the breath used in vinyassa (moving) asana practice for breath control.