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Breathe your way to digestive health!

New Year is often a time for resolving to change some aspect of our lives – to improve our experience of life in some specific way. Sometimes, we resolve to give up something; smoking, chocolate or alcohol perhaps. Sometimes we try to take something on like joining a gym, starting a detox or resolving to eat more healthily. I would like to suggest one small change that could revolutionise your life and it only takes 5 minutes every day....

My suggestion is you learn....to breathe!

Yes, I really mean it! Often when I see clients who complain of longstanding constipation, weight gain and general sluggishness, it is because they do not breathe appropriately. Their bodies are not being supplied with enough oxygen to repair cells and feed their metabolism. The result is that they hang onto cellular waste, suffer from colon sluggishness and, because their metabolism is affected, they put on weight! So, how do we know whether we are breathing properly or not and how do we change our breathing patterns to benefit from increased oxygen uptake? Firstly, to assess how well you currently breathe:

1. Lie on your back on the floor, with your feet flat on the floor and knees in the air. If you need a small pillow under your head that's fine.
 2. Place one hand lightly on your chest and the other on your tum.
- Now take two breaths in through your nose and out through your mouth. Breathe as deeply as you can.

Now assess...which bits of your body moved as you breathed? If your tum moved up and down as you breathed in and out, and your chest remained still – you are breathing really well. Keep it up! If your tum moved up and down as well as your chest, that is better. If your chest moved up and down but your tummy did not, you certainly need to change your breathing patterns.

Now I know this seems to contradict common sense, but the truth is, we are born breathing from our diaphragm, the powerful muscle at the base of our lungs. Look at a new-born baby breathe and you will see what I mean.

The trouble is that over time we tend to learn to breathe more shallowly using the muscles of our lungs, the inter-costal muscles, and these are not designed to work without



Breathe Your Way...



the diaphragm! When we insist that they do, the levels of oxygen available to our bodies goes down. I have clients who do extensive gym work-outs on minimum oxygen levels and then wonder why they are feeling so tired all the time!!

So, how do we change? It's really simple.

1. Lie down on your back on the floor once more and resume the position outlined above.
2. Place your hands again in the positions above, one on your tum and one on your chest.
3. Now concentrate on breathing in so that the breath bypasses your chest and pushes the hand on your tum up towards the ceiling. The idea is that your chest will stay still and your tum will rise.

Then breathe out through your mouth, pulling your tummy muscles in under your ribs so that all the air drawn into your lungs gets expelled - and your chest still stays static!! Hard isn't it? Well, it might be a little difficult the first few times you try, but I promise it is amazing how quickly your body will adapt. After all, it's how you came into the world breathing! Just five minutes a day will bring real results in just a couple of weeks. In fact, when you first start you must not do more than 5 minutes or you will feel dizzy with the increased oxygen supply!

The best time to practice is just before you go to bed and you will find if you do this regularly, you will sleep more deeply and wake more refreshed...

...and the extra good news is that breathing like this will help with constipation and sluggish digestion too!

