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Butekyo breathing: breathing less, feeling better

By HEATHER SCEARCE

In 1847, a physician named Ignaz Semmelweis, who was the head of the Vienna General Hospital's Obstetrics Clinic, discovered that the simple (yet little practiced) act of hand washing drastically reduced the mortality rate in his obstetrics clinic. Despite his discovery, the practice of hand washing took 40 years to catch on. It wasn't until Louis Pasteur confirmed the germ theory, that the practice gained widespread acceptance. Like many new theories, it took time to accept, because people could not believe that something so simple could have such a profound effect.

Today, a new theory of breathing called Butekyo breathing (whose principles are almost as simple as hand

washing) is revolutionizing the way people think about breathing and the role it plays in many chronic conditions. The idea is this: the less you breathe, the better you can feel.



The method was originally designed for asthma sufferers, but it also extends to other breathing maladies such as snoring, sleep apnea, and rhinitis. Conditions such as fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue, high blood pressure, chronic cough, anxiety, panic, insomnia and other stress-related disorders also respond well to the Butekyo breathing method.

Butekyo breathing was developed by a Russian physician, Dr. Konstantin Butekyo, who researched the connection between many chronic conditions and over breathing. Over breathing, or hyperventilation as it is known, is defined as breathing more than your metabolic needs at any given time.

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Many of us over breathe without realizing it. We take in too much oxygen and then release too much carbon dioxide from our bodies. When the carbon dioxide levels in our bodies drop too far, the smooth muscles (such as those around your airways) constrict in an attempt to hold onto the carbon dioxide. This is what happens to asthma sufferers. According to Butekyo, an asthma sufferer's carbon dioxide levels are far too low.

A Butekyo expert

Pippa Kiraly is a local Butekyo breathing practitioner with Lifelong Easy Breathing based in Madison Valley. She knows, first hand, what it's like to live with asthma. She discovered Butekyo breathing in 2002, and since then, is symptom-free and no longer uses medication.

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"By retraining the breathing back to a more appropriate level, the asthma symptoms go away," Kiraly said. "When you breathe more lightly, you feel better."

Butekyo Breathing is very simple. Here are some of the practice's basic breathing principles: learn how to keep your mouth shut day and night as you breathe; learn how to breathe from your diaphragm; learn how to breathe more slowly and more lightly.

When asked how often you should breathe through your mouth, Dr. Butekyo once said, "You should breathe through your mouth as often as you eat through your nose."

He believed that when you breathe through your mouth, you release precious carbon dioxide from your body. We breathe in 21 percent oxygen and we exhale 16 percent oxygen, the reason why CPR is so effective.

When you breathe out, you lose 4.5 percent of your carbon dioxide with every breath. When you breathe in, you do not replace that amount, since there is only 0.03 percent carbon dioxide in the air. Given this discrepancy, Butekyo teaches you to conserve the carbon dioxide in your body by keeping your mouth shut and only breathing through your nose.

When you breathe through your mouth, the air goes into your lungs cold, dry, and dirty. When you breathe through your nose, which filters and warms the air, the air goes down warm, moist, and clean. From that perspective, breathing in through your nose seems much more preferable.

But what about exercise?

Would Butekyo breathing be appropriate during physical activity? What if you are in fitness class, or you're running a marathon, or cycling in a triathlon. The light, easy, closed-mouth breathing of Butekyo wouldn't be appropriate, would it?

"Have you ever seen a cheetah run with its mouth open?" Kiraly playfully responded. "The cheetah is the fastest animal on the planet. Look at any film of a cheetah running. You will never see one running with its mouth open."

If you are interested in learning more about Butekyo Breathing, contact Pippa Kiraly at Lifelong Easy Breathing, info@lifelongeasybreathing.com or call 206-329-6604.

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