The Buteyko Method of breathing

Important Points

- The Buteyko Breathing Program is a series of lectures and practical training in breathing reconditioning and does not constitute medical treatment.
- Medication should be kept handy at all times.
- Modify prescribed medication only after consultation with a medical doctor.

1. Always Breath Through Your NOSE

2. Breathe Gently

Breathing through your nose will warm, moisten and filter the air before it reaches the lungs. If your nose is blocked, use the method you have been taught to unblock it.

Keep in mind the importance of gentle breathing. If you find yourself over-breathing (hyperventilating), then as soon as possible return to normal breathing pattern.

PRINCIPLES on SLEEP

1. Sleep with your mouth closed
2. Sleep on your left side if possible. If reduces tidal volume of breathing. Avoid sleeping on your back.
3. Sleep only when you are tired.

PRINCIPLES on DIET

1. Eat only when hungry
2. Do not overeat, stop before you are full. Overeating deepens your breathing. You may find that there is a reduction in your appetite. This can be a part of the stabilising process. It is important to listen to your body.
3. FOODS TO AVOID or DECREASE during early training
   a) milk and milk products
   b) Coffee
c) Strong tea  
d) Coke  
e) Chocolate/coca  
f) High protein food (especially animal protein eg meat, fish, chicken, chicken stock)  
g) Nuts, honey, strawberries, raspberries.  
h) Alcohol  
Be aware that some foods may increase your breathing rate or cause overbreathing.

4. It may be helpful to introduce unrefined sea salt into your diet.

5. To test the effect of a particular food on your breathing take your pulse and control pause before eating then again 1-1&1/2 hours later.

PRINCIPLES ON MEDICATION

1. Keep your bronchodilator medication, such as Ventolin, Bricanyl, Atrovent etc. with you at all times and use it if you need to. If possible, when you first sense an asthma attack coming on, do the Buteyko exercises. Prevent or overcome symptoms such as tightness, wheezing, coughing, shortness of breath, by first using the Buteyko Method. If it is not possible to try the exercises, or they do not help, or you do not get enough relief, then use your medication. At any time, TAKE MEDICATION, IF NECESSARY. As soon as possible after taking it, start your breathing exercises again.

2. You must continue to take your preventative medication (for asthma, Pulmicort, Becotide, Becloforte, Flixotide, Prednisone, Intal) as prescribed by your doctor.

3. Consult your doctor regularly.

FLU AND COLD MANAGEMENT

1. Increase Buteyko breathing exercise sessions to three or four times a day.

2. Take medication if necessary. Increase your steroid medication if appropriate (discuss with your doctor).

3. Reduce your food intake; avoid foods that increase the breathing rate; keep diet simple.

4. Avoid known allergens or trigger factors.

5. Rest more but sleep a bit less or break your sleep if you experience problems during or after sleep.

6. Drink clear fluids e.g. lemon drinks, herb teas (avoid tea/coffee)

7. Keep warm, stay out of draughts.

8. Sit up if possible (don’t lay down all day).

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

In the early stages of your training avoid those factors which usually increase your breathing rate or cause deep breathing and are likely to bring on asthma or your symptoms or make you lose control of your breathing. The most common of these are strenuous physical
exercise, running/jogging, fast walking, emotional situations, yelling/shouting, chemical and
paint vapours, alcohol, overeating and oversleeping.

Do your exercises as prescribed by your practitioner, according to your need. Do not do
more than is prescribed to you.

Unless you are a trained Buteyko practitioner, it is not good practice to teach other people
these exercises.

Should your medication intake increase or your condition become less controlled then
contact Tess and your medical practitioner.

PRINCIPLES OF THE BUTEYKO METHOD

What is normal breathing?
At rest we should breathe about 4-6 litres of air per minute.

What is hyperventilation?
Hyperventilation is defined as ventilation in excess of metabolic requirements.
Hyperventilation (HV) is breathing more than 6 litres per min. at rest.

Why is it important to breathe correctly?
The gas mix in the air we breath, 21% oxygen (O2), 0.03% carbon dioxide (CO2), is different
to the gas mix we need to maintain in our lungs, 14% O2, and 5.5-6.5% CO2. The body
creates CO2 through metabolic processes and the lungs have the role of a regulator of the
gases to maintain correct body functioning.

Hyperventilation, what happens?
If we breathe too much we exhale more CO2 than we produce, creating a deficit of CO2. A
clinical trial in Australian showed hyperventilation in all the asthmatic subjects. They
breathed on average about 3 times the recommended volume of air per minute.

What is the role of CO2 in the body?
1. CO2 is our body’s natural bronchodilator, blood vessel dilator and smooth muscle dilator.
2. CO2 is the body’s most important buffer in the regulation of the body’s acid/alkali balance.
   Low levels of CO2 may lead to respiratory alkalosis. The alkaline shifts interfere with the
   metabolic processes and cause a weakening in the immune system, which can manifest in
   allergies, susceptibility to colds, flues and viruses, infections may lead to the development of
tumours.
3. Lowered levels of CO2 strengthens the bond between haemoglobin (in red blood cells) and
   O2, therefore making it difficult for sufficient oxygenation of the tissues of the brain and
   other vital organs. Therefore our tissues may suffer oxygen starvation (Hypoxia) regardless
   of the amount of O2 present if there is insufficient CO2. O2 starvation causes a false feeling
   of insufficiency of air, shortness of breath – this prompts the patient to breath deeper. But
the deeper breathing the greater the O2 starvation can become and the viscous circle is completed.

If Carbon Dioxide levels in the body fall below 3% the whole organism dies. Therefore the body tries to guard against excessive loss of CO2. Once CO2 levels have reached a point that is considered intolerable by the organism, the body creates a defence mechanism, that manifests in constriction of the pathways which serve CO2 elimination (blocked nose, bronchospasm, polyp growth, mucus, spasm of the arterial vessels, smooth muscle of intestine, biliary ducts etc.) aimed at preventing further loss of CO2 as well as attempting to raise CO2 levels. Because the body uses the same channels for oxygen provision, these spasms create a shortage of oxygen supply to the brain, heart etc., which increases the oxygen starvation in the body. Thus there is a strict physiological law:

**The greater the overbreathing – the less oxygen reaches the body’s cells.**

The Real Disease

Dr. Buteyko states that the real disease behind asthma, allergies, emphysema, sleep apnoea, panic disorders, chronic fatigue syndrome, sinus etc. is:

HYPERVENTILATION SYNDROME or the disease of deep breathing, resulting in the loss of carbon dioxide and consequent metabolic disturbances in the body. He sees asthma, allergies etc as natural defences to incorrect breathing. For example the physiological changes that characterise asthma are:

1. smooth muscle spasm
2. inflammation
3. increased mucus production

These components of asthma can be seen as natural defence reactions of the body, an attempt by the body to prevent further loss of CO2, to increase levels of CO2 and to prevent dehydration caused by the overbreathing. If asthma is a disease of overbreathing then it makes sense that we treat it by breathing reconditioning. Many other diseases can be viewed as the body’s attempt to create health.

The Aim of the Buteyko Method

The Buteyko Method aims at normalising the breathing rate and depth and therefore the CO2 levels (as well as removing the causes of hyperventilation), so that metabolic processes can be restored and healing can occur. As a result the symptoms of overbreathing subside completely in most cases.
How does the Buteyko Method work?

The Buteyko Method uses education, behaviour modification and breathing exercises to:

1. Overcome acute symptoms by using the natural dilating effects of carbon dioxide.
2. Prevent symptoms and attacks by normalising carbon dioxide levels in the body and reduce the need for medication.
3. Recondition and normalise the breathing pattern by re-education the brains breathing centre to accept normal levels of carbon dioxide (5.5%-6.5% alveolar air). The breathing centre will then automatically sustain a normal breathing pattern that allows the person to maintain the correct balance of oxygen and carbon dioxide.
4. Increase confidence through greater understanding of asthma and the effects of food and certain behaviours on breathing.