

So, You Think Breathing is Trivial - Check This Out!!!

The Numbers Game

- **Breaths Per Day:** The average person takes between 17,000 and 23,000 breaths per day. We do this automatically, without even thinking about it!
- **Total Volume:** In a single day, an adult breathes in and out approximately 2,000 to 2,500 gallons of air. That's enough to fill a large swimming pool.
- **A Slowing Pace:** The average adult's breathing rate at rest is about 12 to 20 breaths per minute. This rate is significantly higher in infants (30-60 breaths per minute) and can increase to over 40-60 breaths per minute during intense exercise.

What We're Breathing

- **Inhaled vs. Exhaled Air:** The air we inhale is about 21% oxygen and less than 1% carbon dioxide. When we exhale, the composition changes dramatically: the air is about 16% oxygen and 4% carbon dioxide. This shows how efficiently our bodies use oxygen and expel waste.
- **Water Loss:** We exhale a surprising amount of water. Our lungs release about half a liter of water vapor every single day. This is one of the reasons it's so important to stay hydrated.

The Brain-Body Connection

- **The Vagus Nerve:** The vagus nerve, which is a major part of the parasympathetic "rest and digest" nervous system, passes through the diaphragm. When we engage in deep, diaphragmatic breathing, we stimulate this nerve, which sends a signal to our brain to calm down and reduce stress.
- **The Only Conscious and Unconscious System:** Breathing is the only major bodily function that is both involuntary (we do it without thinking) and voluntary (we can consciously control it). This unique dual nature is what makes breathwork so powerful as a tool for influencing our mental and emotional states.
- **Emotions and Breath:** Our emotional state directly affects our breathing patterns. When we're angry or afraid, our breathing becomes rapid and shallow. When we're calm and relaxed, it's slow and deep. This also works in reverse: consciously changing our breathing can change our emotional state.

Remarkable Trivia

- **World Records:** The record for the longest time a person has voluntarily held their breath is over 24 minutes! This was achieved by Aleix Segura Vendrell of Spain, a testament to the immense power of training and breath control.

- **Left vs. Right Nostril:** Some yogic traditions believe that breathing through the left nostril activates the parasympathetic nervous system (calm), while breathing through the right nostril activates the sympathetic nervous system (energising).
- **The "Lung Float Test":** In forensics, the "lung float test" is a real thing. If a baby's lungs float in water, it's an indication that the baby was born alive and took a breath. If they sink, it suggests the baby was stillborn. This is because the tiny air sacs (alveoli) in the lungs become filled with air for the first time.