

KAPALABHATI BREATH

Frontal brain cleansing breath

Kapalbhati is one of the six shatkarmas, cleansing practices. The Sanskrit word *Kapal* means 'cranium' or 'forehead' and *bhati* means 'light' or 'splendour' and also 'perception' or 'knowledge'. It is said that kapalbhati helps to bring a state of clarity or light to the front of the brain. You may come across this practice by its other name kapalshodhana - to purify.

Kapalbhati must be done after asanas and before any meditation practice. It is used to help clear the nadis ida and pingala, the pathways for energy flow; and helps to bring about the state of 'pratyahara' (sense withdrawal) which prepares the mind for meditation. Physically it will help:

- Clear the respiratory tracts so great for those suffering with asthma or bronchial issues
- Is energising and invigorating
- Helps to balance and strengthen the nervous system
- Helps the digestive system, tones the digestion organs
- Stimulates the liver, spleen and pancreas
- Tones the abdominal muscles

PROHIBITIONS....do not practice if you suffer from the following:

- Heart disease
- Untreated High Blood Pressure
- Vertigo
- Epilepsy
- Stroke
- Hernia or gastric ulcer

PRECAUTIONS

If you feel any dizziness or faintness whilst practicing then stop, rest, and start again when you feel OK.

HOW TO...

Sit in any comfortable position, hands in chin or jnana mudra.

Make a connection to your breath.

Keeping the shoulders still, as you exhale draw the abdomen back forcibly. Let the inhalation come in smoothly and passively. Feel the abdomen move as you exhale, drawing it back deeply.

Begin slowly, one pump of exhalation per second. Feel with it to find the rhythm as there is a technique to it. Once you have it though, work up to doing 10 breaths, stop for a rest, and then repeat with two more rounds of 10 breaths.

Overtime you can build up the practice to 3 rounds of 50 breaths.

If you have any of the prohibitions above, you may be able to practice very slowly, making long slow exhalations whilst still drawing the abdomen back. Always let the inhalation be passive and spontaneous.