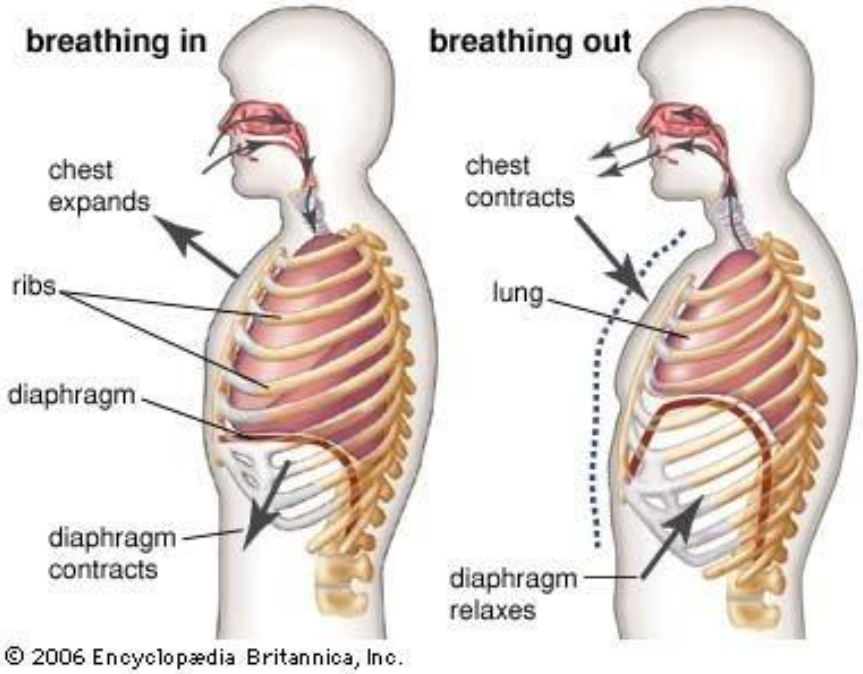
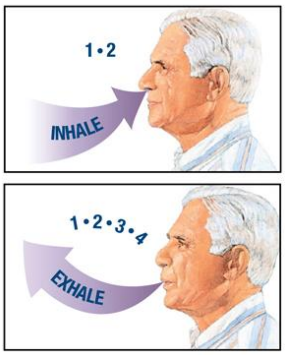
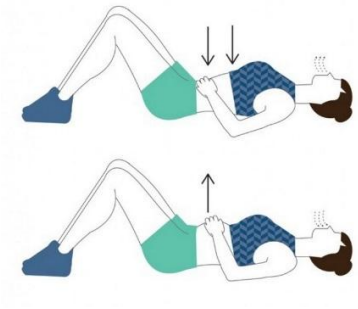
Boulder Community Health

PATIENT EDUCATION

Helpful Breathing Techniques for People with Lung Disease

Patient Instructions	
Why use these breathing techniques?	The major muscles used for normal breathing are the diaphragm and the rib muscles. When the diaphragm becomes weak, people with lung disease can develop a breathing pattern that uses other muscles (neck, shoulders, ribs) to breathe. Diaphragmatic breathing and purse lip breathing are techniques that help correct this habit by making the diaphragm and the belly muscles stronger. These techniques allow more air to move in and out of the lungs without tiring the chest muscles. 
Using these techniques will:	• Improve how air moves in and out of the lungs • Help to release air trapped in the lungs • Keep the airways open longer and make breathing easier • Help to slow your breathing rate • Relieve shortness of breath • Cause general relaxation
Purse lip breathing	Purse lip breathing is one of the simplest ways to control shortness of breath you may feel with lung disease. This technique gives you a way to slow your rate of breathing, making each breath more effective.

	• Step 1: Relax the neck and shoulder muscles. • Step 2: Keeping your mouth closed, take in a slow, easy breath through the nose for a count of two. • Step 3: Purse your lips (like you are trying to whistle or blow out candles). • Step 4: Breathe out slowly through your pursed lips to a count of four.  Image: BreathingLabs (n.d.)
Diaphragmatic breathing	• Step 1: Lie down or sit in a chair with your head and shoulders supported. • Step 2: Place your hand on your tummy, at your belly button, and relax. • Step 3: Breathe in through your nose while gently pushing out your tummy. Your hand should rise outward as you breathe in slowly. • Step 4: Place the other hand on the upper part of the chest to make sure that it is moving as little as possible. • Step 5: Breathe out slowly using pursed lips while gently pushing inward and upward with your hand to help empty your lungs. • Step 6: Repeat. Practice the technique in a sitting or standing position till you are comfortable doing it anywhere.  Image: mypain.ca (n.d.)

For more information, please speak to your doctor, nurse, or respiratory therapist.

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