

## Relaxation

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Relaxation is a process that decreases the effects of stress on your mind and body. There are different techniques that can help you cope with everyday stress and stress related to various health problems, including respiratory illnesses.

How can stress affect you and your health?

Stress can:

- increase your heart rate
- increase your blood pressure
- increase tension in muscles
- increase pain
- lead to problems concentrating
- lead to anger and/or frustration
- cause or increase anxiety

Practicing relaxation techniques can reduce stress symptoms by:

- slowing your heart rate
- lowering your blood pressure
- slowing your breathing rate
- increasing blood flow to muscles
- reducing muscle tension and chronic pain
- improving concentration
- reducing anger and frustration
- boosting confidence
- decreasing anxiety and tension

The best way to start and maintain a relaxation technique is to add it into your daily routine.

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## Ways to Relax

Some ways to relax are reading, walking, watching TV, doing yoga or tai chi, listening to music and gardening.

If you have a way of relaxing that works for you, use it.

If you do not have a way to relax, try a few ways to discover what you like to do and what works for you.

Remember, everyone is different. Do what works for you.

To get the most benefit, use relaxation techniques along with other positive coping methods, such as exercising, getting enough sleep, reaching out to supportive family and friends.



## Visualization or Guided Imagery

With this method, you think about being in a pleasant and relaxing place.

- Start by sitting or lying in a quiet, comfortable place.
- Close your eyes. Begin pursed-lip breathing and relax your body as much as you can.
- Think of a beautiful, peaceful place where you have been or where you would like to go. Picture this place. Imagine the sounds and smells that are there.
- Feel the breeze or sun or warmth on your skin. Just sit back and imagine that you are there.
- No one else is around. You can hear all of the sounds of the place.
- When you are ready, slowly open your eyes. Do you feel more relaxed?



## Some examples of things to think about as you relax:

- Picture yourself lying on a quiet, sandy beach with the sun warming your body. Hear the waves gently lapping up on the shore.
- Picture yourself on a soft bed in a quiet room, feel the sun shining in through the window and the gentle breeze coming in.
- Imagine walking along a path in the forest or garden. Hear the birds and the leaves blowing in the breeze, feel the breeze on your skin...



## **Progressive Muscle Relaxation**

This method involves learning to tighten, then relax one muscle group at a time.

- Lie or sit in a quiet, comfortable place.
- Close your eyes.
- Breathe normally using relaxed, pursed lip breathing.
- Do not hold your breath.
- Begin at top of your body and move down.
- Squeeze your eyelids shut and hold to a count of 3.
- Relax your eyelids.
- Now scrunch up your nose and hold to a count of 3, then relax.
- Clench your jaw and hold to a count of 3, then relax.
- Do the same for each body part moving from your shoulders down to your toes.

**Notes:**