



Kapalabhati

Skull Shining Breath

Taught by Andy B Allen

Kapalabhati is a powerful yogic breathing technique that has been practiced for centuries in the tradition of yoga. It is derived from the Sanskrit words "kapala" meaning "skull" and "bhati" meaning "shining" or "illuminating." Kapalabhati is often referred to as the "skull-shining breath" or the "breath of fire."

Technique

Kapalabhati involves forceful exhalations and passive inhalations. To practice Kapalabhati, sit in a comfortable position with an upright spine. Take a deep inhalation, then begin to exhale, with the last pocket of air then sharply and forcefully contract the abdominal muscles to forcefully exhale through the nose. Allow the inhalation to happen naturally, without any effort or force. The exhalation should be quick, short, and forceful, while the inhalation is passive and relaxed. Repeat this cycle of forceful exhalations and passive inhalations in a rhythmic and continuous manner.

Beginners start with 4 rounds of 10 cycles. Once or twice a day, double the number after 10 days or so and continue increasing until reaching 120 cycles in about 60 seconds



Benefits of the Practice

- **Cleansing and Energizing:** Kapalabhati is believed to cleanse the respiratory system, expel stale air, and increase the intake of fresh oxygen. It helps to clear the nasal passages, sinuses, and lungs. The rapid and forceful exhalations generate heat in the body, which can help to increase energy levels and invigorate the system.
- **Focus and Mental Clarity:** Practicing Kapalabhati can have a stimulating effect on the brain. It is often used as a preparatory practice before meditation to help clear the mind, increase focus, and enhance mental clarity. The rhythmic and forceful exhalations can help release tension, stress, and stagnant energy, promoting a state of alertness and relaxation.
- **Abdominal Strength:** Kapalabhati primarily engages the abdominal muscles. Regular practice can strengthen the diaphragm, abdominal muscles, and pelvic floor muscles. It massages the internal organs, improves digestion, and promotes a healthy digestive system.



Benefits of the Practice

- Kapalbhathi purifies the whole body by accelerating the replacement of alveolar air, stimulating the exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide and at the same time increasing oxygen concentration in the alveoli. The total effect is one of cleansing and increasing metabolism throughout the body. The increased metabolic rate and oxygen supply to the brain have an awakening effect on the brain, and the nervous system is balanced and strengthened. The practice also tones the digestive organs and helps in respiratory disorders such as asthma, emphysema, bronchitis and tuberculosis.
- Kapalbhathi is particularly useful for spiritual aspirants as it arrests sensory distractions, thoughts, visions and mental chatter, calming the mind in preparation for meditation. At the same time, it energizes the mind so one is not overcome by sleep while sitting for meditation. The effects also help those engaged in mental work.



Contraindications

It's important to note that Kapalabhati may not be suitable for everyone, especially those with respiratory or abdominal conditions. Should be avoided by people with:

- Having a cold, flu or respiratory illness
- Pregnant women
- Menstruating women
- High blood pressure
- Heart disease
- Epilepsy
- Vertigo
- Stroke
- Hernia
- Gastric ulcer



Be Responsible

If you've never done it before, it is recommended to learn and practice Kapalabhati under the guidance of a qualified yoga teacher. They can provide proper instruction, ensure correct technique, and address any individual considerations or contraindications. Yoga and most yoga practices are meant for balanced individuals. If you are out of balance, that is what the preparatory exercises are for.



Practice

Recommendations for Beginners

- Practice once or twice a day.
- Perform 4 rounds, with 10 cycles in each round.
- After approximately 1 week, double the number of cycles.
- Continue increasing the number of cycles until reaching 120 cycles.
- Next, focus on completing a round in 60 seconds, with 2 cycles per second.

Remember that achieving this may take time, so be persistent.

