Respiratory Health

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The body's respiratory system is made up of organs and tissues that help us breathe. Keeping this system strong and healthy is important to our health and well-being, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Keep the following tips in mind to keep your respiratory system strong:

Quit smoking
Being a current or former cigarette smoker may increase your risk of illness. Smoking is the leading cause of lung cancer. Secondhand smoke is related to thousands of adult deaths per year. Even if you don't smoke, you should avoid secondhand smoke as much as possible.

Beat summer allergies
April showers and May flowers are almost gone, and summer allergies are in full bloom. Allergies can trigger dangerous symptoms for those who suffer from asthma. It is important to reduce allergy triggers and take extra steps when pollen counts are high.

Avoid air pollution
Summer's strong sunlight and calm winds create clouds of ozone and smog around cities. Check the outdoor air quality before leaving your home. Test your home for radon, mold, and carbon monoxide to prevent possible lung damage.

Exercise
Getting enough exercise makes your lungs better at giving your body the oxygen it needs. Regular exercise can help prevent breathing issues and make your lungs and breathing muscles stronger. It is also a great way to manage stress during this time.

For more information about staying healthy during COVID-19, go to CDC.gov. Talk with your health care provider if you have any concerns or if you think you have symptoms of COVID-19.

Source: WebMD.com, ClevelandCinic.org, MayoClinic.org, CDC.gov

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Breathing to relax

Your respiratory system can also promote relaxation in the body and mind. By practicing a variety of breathing techniques, you can calm your nerves and even lower your blood pressure. Find a few of these exercises to try out below.

Exhaling slowly

- Begin by sitting, standing, or lying on your back in a comfortable position
- Take a comfortable breath in, and let your belly rise or expand as you breathe in for 3 seconds
- Then breathe out for 7 seconds
- Repeat at a comfortable rate for 1 minute
- Stop if you feel lightheaded or short of breath

Diaphragmatic breathing

- Start in a comfortable seated position with your eyes closed
- Inhale comfortably, allowing your abdomen and lower ribcage to expand
- Then exhale as slowly as you can, allowing your abdomen to contract
- Perform this at a slow, comfortable pace for up to 15 minutes
- Stop if you become lightheaded or short of breath

Nostril yoga breathing

- Using your right thumb, block the right nostril, and exhale through the left
- Keeping the right nostril blocked, inhale through the left nostril
- Remove your thumb, and use your right ring finger to block the left nostril, and exhale through the right nostril
- Then inhale through the right nostril
- Remove your ring finger, and use the right thumb to block the right nostril; exhale, and repeat
- The basic pattern should be: inhale, switch, exhale; inhale, switch, exhale
- Stop if you feel lightheaded or short of breath

Source: MedbridgeEducation.com

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