

A presentation by [Dr. Weil](#) at Expo West in California.

In the presentation summary he outlined some of the best resources he's learned over his clinical career for improving health, and topping the list, interestingly, was a breathing exercise called the 4-7-8, or [Relaxing Breath Exercise](#).

On his site, he states:

"Practicing regular, mindful breathing can be calming and energizing and can even help with stress-related health problems ranging from panic attacks to digestive disorders."

The 4-7-8 Breathing Exercise

The key to this exercise is to remember the numbers 4, 7 and 8. It's not important to focus on how much time you spend in each phase of the breathing activity, but rather that you get the ratio correct.

Here's how it's done:

1. Sit up straight
2. Place the tip of your tongue up against the back of your front teeth. Keep it there through the entire breathing process
3. Breathe in silently through your nose to the count of four
4. Hold your breath to the count of seven
5. Exhale through your mouth to the count of eight, making an audible "woosh" sound
6. That completes one full breath. Repeat the cycle another three times, for a total of four breaths

You can do this exercise as frequently as you want throughout the day, but it's recommended you don't do more than four full breaths during the first month or so of practice. Later you may work your way up to eight full breath cycles at a time.

The benefits of this simple practice are enormous and work as a natural tranquilizer for your nervous system.

Personally, I think one of its greatest values may be gained when you combine it with your meals. Most of us eat three meals a day, so it makes remembering to do it easier. Also, I believe that combining it with the attitude of gratitude for the healthy meal you just ate, or are about to eat, can have a powerful, beneficial influence on your health.

The Health Benefits of Breathing Exercises

Self-applied health enhancement methods like the 4-7-8 breathing technique are particularly remarkable because of the broad array of real health benefits that are triggered.

Learning to breathe mindfully can modify and accelerate your body's inherent self-regulating physiological and bioenergetic mechanisms.

These changes are in large part due to the fact that you're oxygenating your body properly as well as correcting your internal and energetic balance, and it has a direct impact your nervous system.

This in turn affects your entire body and its countless cellular functions, including all of your subtle energy systems.

The web site breathing.com offers a list of clinical studies into the health benefits of optimal breathing. One such study, which spanned a 30-year period, concluded that *the most significant factor in your health and longevity is how well you breathe.*

It focused on the long-term predictive power of forced exhalation volume as the primary marker for life span. According to the researchers,

"This pulmonary function measurement appears to be an indicator of general health and vigor and literally a measure of living capacity."

It's also important to realize that much of hypertension is controlled by the way you breathe, so breathing exercises are an excellent adjunct to your [other healthy lifestyle strategies to control high blood pressure](#).

Breathing exercises such as the one I showed you above have a positive impact on your:

- **Respiratory system**, which can reduce mental and physical fatigue, as well as relieve symptoms of asthma and bronchitis
- **Circulatory system**; improving blood circulation and cell oxygenation throughout your body
- **Nervous system**
- **Digestive system**, by acting as a pump to massage internal organs
- **Endocrine system**. The action of your diaphragm helps push lymph throughout your body, which helps eliminate toxic waste and strengthen your immune system
- **Urinary system**, by helping to eliminate fluids and massaging your kidneys
- **Skin**. Toxic CO₂ waste is eliminated more directly through your breath, and your skin can also be positively affected by improved blood flow and oxygenation

Breathing Your Way to Optimal Health

Another obvious use for the 4-7-8 breathing technique is to use it whenever you feel stressed or anxious. It's a powerful way to help relax your system without drugs.

Best of all, it doesn't cost you anything but a couple of minutes of your time! And, if you commit to it, I believe you'll be absolutely shocked, and pleasantly surprised, by how quickly and easily it can center and relax you and allow you to achieve high levels of health.