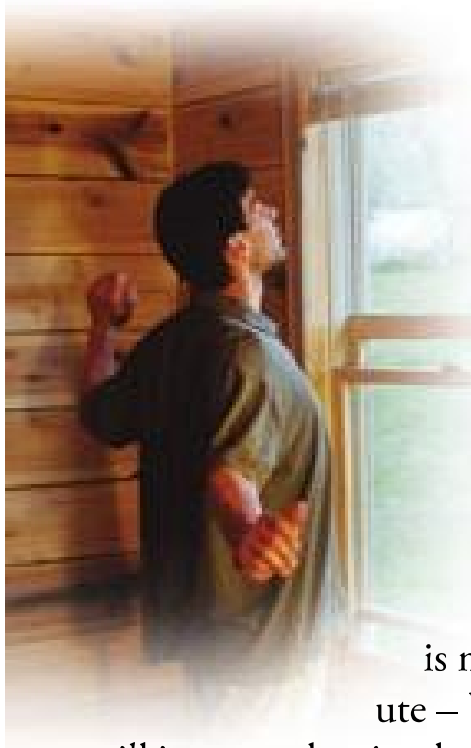


Air

A human being can survive several days without food, a few days without water, but only a few short minutes without air. This element is essential to sustain life. Without air a person could have permanent brain damage within five minutes.

Why is air so important?

The air we breathe contains oxygen. Red blood cells pick up the oxygen from the lungs and carry it to all the cells of the body. Each cell needs oxygen to operate its powerhouses. Red blood cells then carry the carbon dioxide back to the lungs. When we breathe out, this is forced out of the body with the oxygen-poor air.



Poor ventilation of rooms can result in headaches, drowsiness and difficulty in concentration. The reason? When air is breathed and rebreathed over and over, the oxygen content decreases and the carbon dioxide and other wastes increase. Bad air and poor breathing habits promote depression, irritability, exhaustion and chronic fatigue.

When exercising, up to 26 gallons of air is moved in and out of your lungs per minute – but only about 1 gallon at rest. Exercise will increase the circulation of oxygen rich blood cells to all areas of the body. Your energy level and sense of well-being will improve.

The Solution

- ▶ Open your windows and let in the fresh air! Sleep with an open window whenever possible.
- ▶ Exercise in fresh air. This will strengthen your breathing muscles and increase your lung capacity.
- ▶ Practice good posture habits. Sit up straight with your shoulders back. You will be able to breathe deeper.
- ▶ Concentrate on breathing deeply. Stop where you are several times a day and take a few slow, deep breaths.
- ▶ Keep some live houseplants. They remove many pollutants and use carbon dioxide, replacing it with oxygen.

Poisoned Air

One of the worst enemies of breathing freely is **tobacco**. Smoking causes the normal air passages to become clogged and irritated. Nicotine in the smoke constricts small arteries; carbon monoxide interferes directly with the ability of the red blood cells to carry oxygen. Together they decrease endurance and promote narrowing and hardening of the arteries.

Many smokers do not realize the danger that the tobacco smoke has upon others as well. **Secondhand smoke** can be as lethal as smoking is to the smoker. Especially at risk are children of smokers who must breathe this deadly air over a long time.

Smokers who quit begin to heal almost immediately. The biggest favor you can do for your body is: **kick the habit and breathe free.**

Some areas of the world must contend with **air pollution**. If that is a problem in your city, try to stay out of the worst concentrations. Don't exercise outdoors when the smog is at its worst.

