

[IMAGE]

Breathing for BP

By Editorial Staff

With all the blood pressure-lowering medications on the market, it's easy to be convinced that drugs are the only solution for high BP. That's not the case; in fact, lowering your blood pressure may be achievable by doing something your body does naturally approximately 20,000 times per day: taking a breath.

OK, not exactly, but researchers are definitely on to something. A five-minute daily breathing workout that involves breathing through a hand-held device that provides resistance (30 breaths per day, six days a week) appears to reduce systolic blood pressure dramatically after six weeks – as much or more as that achieved by walking 30 minutes daily, five days a week, or taking BP-lowering medication. Study findings, published in the *Journal of the American Heart Association*, suggest that results are maintained for at least six weeks after discontinuing the breathing workout.

lungs - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark The breathing exercise is known as High-Resistance Inspiratory Muscle Strength Training (IMST), and it's actually not new. It was developed in the 1980s to help patients critically ill with respiratory diseases. You may not have a resistance device such as that used in IMST protocols, but that doesn't mean you can't train your breathing muscles in the same fashion. It's all about teaching your body to breathe under conditions that involve "resistance" - more challenging than the norm. Think any type of exercise that makes you breathe harder; perhaps swimming is an ideal example (which may explain why swimming is regarded as an excellent exercise for reducing BP and optimizing cardiovascular health overall). Your doctor can tell you more about how exercise and diet play a huge role in preventing high blood pressure and helping reduce it if it's too high.

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