Bhastrika: Bellows Breath

Before you practice

These guides are general fitness and mindfulness content written by BLKMAT. They are not medical advice, therapy, or treatment, and they are not a substitute for a qualified yoga teacher or health professional.

- Check with a doctor or physical therapist before starting a new exercise routine, especially if you are pregnant, recovering from an injury or surgery, or managing a heart, blood-pressure, joint, or balance condition.
- Move within a comfortable range. Mild stretching sensation is fine; sharp, pinching, or electric pain, numbness, or dizziness means stop.
- If you feel faint, dizzy, short of breath, or unwell at any point, stop and rest. Get medical help if it doesn't pass quickly.
- Breathe through your nose if you can, and never hold your breath to force a pose.
- Use a wall, chair, folded blanket, or pillow for support whenever it helps. Props are not "cheating."
- Practice on a dry mat on a flat, non-slip floor. BLKMAT mats have a natural rubber base, which contains latex.

Zodiac and chakra themes in these guides are cultural and creative frameworks for choosing what to practice and what to pay attention to. They are not scientific or health claims.

A BLKMAT guide to Bhastrika, the bellows breath. Two or three rounds of ten breaths, seated, on an empty stomach. Read the safety note first.

What it is

In Bhastrika both halves of the breath are active and forceful: you pump air in and out through the nose in equal measure, using the belly and chest together. It is the most heating, stimulating technique in this category, and it is dosed in small rounds.

When to use it

In small amounts, in the morning, when an experienced practitioner wants heat and alertness before practice. Never before sleep. Never as a first, or casual, technique.

How to practice

1. Sit tall, hands on your knees, stomach empty. Breathe normally for a few breaths.
2. Exhale forcefully through the nose by pulling the belly in; immediately inhale forcefully by expanding the belly and chest. In and out are equal in force and length.
3. Continue in a steady rhythm. The sound is like a bellows — even and rhythmic, not frantic.
4. After 10 breaths, stop. Inhale slowly, exhale slowly, and rest for at least 30–60 seconds, breathing normally.
5. A second or third round is optional. More is not better.

Timing and counts

Round	Rounds	Pace
10 breaths	2–3, with full rest in between	About 1 breath per second; slower is fine

Why people practice it

Tradition treats Bhastrika as a way to build internal heat and clear the breathing passages before practice. In plain terms it is a strong stimulus — which is exactly why the dose is small and the cautions are long.

Take care

- Experienced practitioners only, and only after Kapalabhati is comfortable.
- **Do not practice** if you are pregnant, have high or uncontrolled blood pressure, a heart condition, a hernia, recent surgery, epilepsy, vertigo, glaucoma, or an ulcer. Traditional guidance also says to skip it during menstruation.
- Stop at the first sign of dizziness, light-headedness, tingling, or nausea, and rest lying down if you need to.
- Never practice Bhastrika in or near water, while driving, or standing up.

Related glossary terms

Pranayama

Part of the Breathing Techniques category in the Practice Library.

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