Nadi Shodhana: Alternate-Nostril Breathing

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 Nadi Shodhana, alternate-nostril breathing. About 3–7 minutes, seated. Read the safety note first.

What it is

Nadi shodhana means “channel clearing.” Using the thumb and ring finger of one hand, you close one nostril at a time so the breath alternates sides in a set pattern. One full cycle — in through the left, out through the right, in through the right, out through the left — is one round.

When to use it

Before meditation or sleep. At the end of a practice, to cool down after heating techniques like Kapalabhati. Whenever you want a quiet, seated few minutes.

How to practice

1. Sit tall. Rest your left hand on your knee. Bring your right hand up and fold the index and middle fingers toward the palm (or rest them lightly between the eyebrows). Your thumb will close the right nostril; your ring finger, the left.
2. Exhale fully. Close the right nostril with your thumb and inhale through the left.
3. Close the left nostril with your ring finger, release the thumb, and exhale through the right.
4. Inhale through the right.
5. Close the right, release the left, and exhale through the left. That completes one round.
6. Continue without pausing between sides. Keep the breath slow, quiet, and even — the hand does the switching; the breath never rushes to catch up.

Timing and counts

Rounds	Pace	Session
5–10	About 4 counts in, 4–6 counts out	3–7 minutes

Why people practice it

Tradition describes it as balancing the two main channels, ida and pingala. In plain terms, it is a slow, deliberate breath that is hard to do while thinking about something else — which is why it is used before meditation.

Take care

- Never force air through a blocked nostril. If one side is congested, breathe gently through both nostrils and follow the pattern in your mind, or come back another day.
- Press lightly. The fingers close the nostril from the side, without pushing the nose over.
- If you feel dizzy, lower your hand and breathe normally.

Related glossary terms

Nadi Shodhana

Part of the Breathing Techniques category in the Practice Library.

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