Sitali: Cooling 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 Sitali, the cooling breath. About 2–5 minutes, seated. Read the safety note first.

What it is

Sitali cools the incoming air by drawing it over a curled tongue. The inhale feels cool on the tongue and at the back of the throat; the exhale is a normal exhale through the nose.

When to use it

On hot days. After a heating practice like Kapalabhati or Bhastrika. Whenever you feel overheated and want to cool down without stopping.

How to practice

1. Sit tall. Stick your tongue out slightly and curl its sides up into a tube. (About a third of people cannot curl their tongue — it is genetic. If yours stays flat, sip the air through your teeth instead, lips parted; that variation is called sitkari.)
2. Inhale slowly through the curled tongue, as if drinking the air through a straw.
3. Close your mouth, and exhale slowly through your nose.
4. Repeat, keeping the shoulders and face relaxed.

Timing and counts

Breaths	Pace	Session
5–10 to start; up to a few minutes	Slow inhale, longer exhale	2–5 minutes

Why people practice it

It is the traditional counterpart to the heating breaths in this category: where Kapalabhati and Bhastrika warm and stir up, Sitali is practiced to feel cooler and quieter. The cool sensation on the tongue is immediate and real; the rest is pacing.

Take care

- Do not practice in cold air or polluted air — this breath skips the nose, which normally warms and filters air.
- If you have asthma or sensitive airways, check with your doctor first, and stop if the cool air irritates your throat or chest.
- Avoid it in winter, or whenever you are already cold.

Related glossary terms

Pranayama

Part of the Breathing Techniques category in the Practice Library.

© 2026 BLKMAT · blkmat.com · General fitness content, not medical advice. Check with your doctor before starting a new exercise routine, and stop if anything hurts.