

Belly Breathing

The diaphragm is a dome shaped muscle that lives at the bottom of the rib cage. Its most important job is to help you breathe! When this muscle contracts and tightens it brings air into your lungs as your ribs get wider and bigger. When it relaxes the air comes out of your lungs. Many people have trouble breathing into their belly and tend to breathe in the upper part of their chest instead. When you breathe into your belly the diaphragm muscle and your pelvic floor muscles move down together. This helps your intestines and your bowels move inside your body to help you from getting constipated.

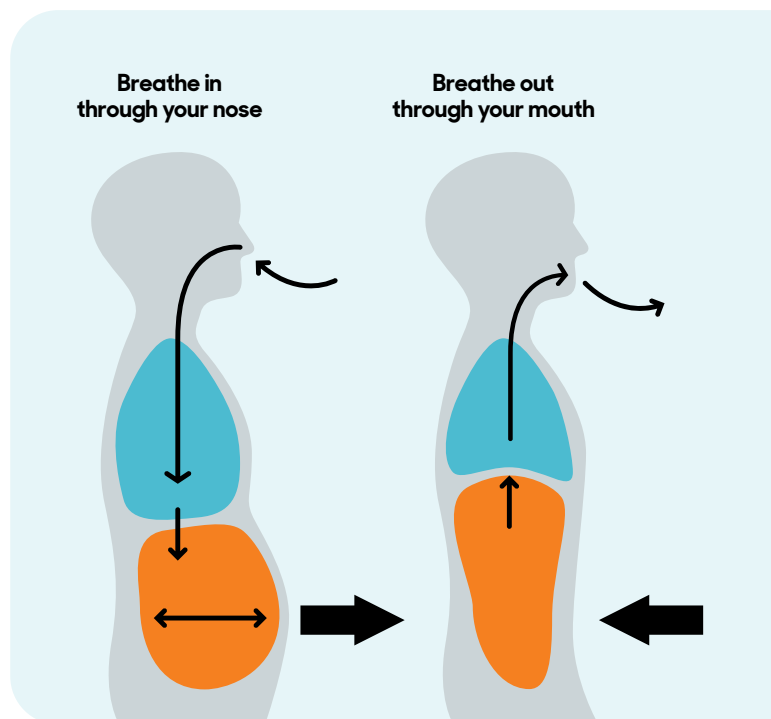
Breathing and doing your pelvic floor or bottom muscles exercises:

If you hold your breath this muscle actually pushes down on your bladder. If that happens your pelvic floor muscles tighten and hold so you don't have a pee leak. If this happens too much your pelvic floor muscles don't learn how to let go and relax like butter.

That's why its always important to count out loud when you do you exercises so you can help train your muscles to hold and relax at the right times.

How to Belly Breathe

- Lay on your back. Place your hands around the bottom of your rib cage.
- Take a deep breath in through your nose, letting your rib cage get wider at the sides and your belly get big. Keep your upper chest, neck and shoulders relaxed as you breathe in.
- As you breathe out through your mouth, let your belly and ribs fall. Exhale and let all the air out.
- It may be helpful to put your hands or your mom or dad's hands around your lower ribs with a little bit of pressure so you when you take a big breath in you have to push their hands out to the sides. A stretchy band can do the same thing and you can do this all by yourself!
- If this is hard to do on your back, lay on your stomach and take a deep breathe in. You can feel your belly get bigger and your back lift. We call this crocodile breathing!
- Remember to breathe slowly. Do not force your breathing.
- Practice this for 2-3 minutes.
- Once mastered and coordinated, practice in the seated position and while stooling to promote complete emptying.



If you are interested in viewing our educational videos or accessing our educational resources, please visit: childrensnational.org/colorectaleducation

For questions or concerns, please contact the Colorectal Clinical Team at: 202-476-COLO (2656) or colorectalnurse@childrensnational.org