

7 WAYS TO REBALANCE YOUR BODY ¹

Your body is amazing. It's a walking chemistry laboratory with millions of reactions happening all the time. Normally you don't notice all this background activity, but when your body chemistry becomes imbalanced you may feel lethargic, irritable or imbalanced.

Here are 7 ways to help your body find its natural balance.

1. Take a deep breath

You may be familiar with this advice, particularly when dealing with stressful situations. Simply stopping to breathe mindfully is a great way to calm down and regain perspective. However you don't need to just do this when you're stressed. Taking two or three deep breaths allows oxygen to enter your brain and can be really beneficial. We have further advice on deep breathing practice below.

2. Take time to exercise

Although it might feel like you're running around after everyone else, taking a moment to have a quick walk can be really beneficial. Exercise helps to quickly oxygenate your body. Oxygen in your blood means it can be released to the organs and tissues where it's needed and you don't have to run a marathon to make a difference, a brisk 10 minute walk around the block is all you need.

3. Easy on the caffeine!

Instead of reaching for a caffeine jolt from things like coffee or cola, try an alternative like peppermint or other flavoured teas.

4. Eat Your Veggies

Vegetables are really good for you. Most of us know that but because we don't like some vegetables we avoid them altogether. If you absolutely hate broccoli, don't take it out on the entire veggie kingdom, eat the ones you do like and try and aim for the 5 portions of vegetables and fruit every day.

5. Say no to crisps and chocolate!

Instead of snacking on things like crisps and chocolate why not try an alternative snack such as nuts or seeds? Health food shops stock an abundance of nuts, seeds and dried fruits and they can offer a delicious substitute.

6. Cut back on meat

Take a cue from the Vegetarians and as an alternative try cutting back on your meat consumption. Beans, fish, and vegetables can make great alternatives to meat and are packed with vital nutrients. Add beans to soups, stew, chilli or wraps, or make them into delicious dips for a high-fibre, high-protein meals.

7. Get help from the honey bee

If you must have sugar in your hot drink, why not try honey instead? It makes a great alternative to the refined white sugar we normally use and two spoons in hot milk makes a great winter warmer!

JUST BREATHE ²

When you're tired it's tempting to slump on the sofa with a cup of tea and biscuit. While this is a great way to enjoy some down-time, we often don't allow ourselves to switch off. By watching the TV or browsing the internet in our spare time we're not giving our brains any time to rest. It's important to take the time to calm yourself with no other distractions and with its focus on full, cleansing breaths, deep breathing is a simple, yet powerful, relaxation technique. It's easy to learn, can be practiced almost anywhere, and provides a quick way to get your stress levels in check. Deep breathing is the cornerstone of many other relaxation practices, too, and can be combined with other relaxing elements such as aromatherapy and music. All you really need is a few minutes and a place to stretch out.

How to practice deep breathing

The key to deep breathing is to breathe deeply from the abdomen, getting as much fresh air as possible in your lungs. When you take deep breaths from the abdomen, rather than shallow breaths from your upper chest, you inhale more oxygen. The more oxygen you get, the less tense, short of breath, and anxious you feel. So the next time you feel stressed, take a minute to slow down and breathe deeply:

- Sit comfortably with your back straight. Put one hand on your chest and the other on your stomach.
- Breathe in through your nose. The hand on your stomach should rise. The hand on your chest should move very little.
- Exhale through your mouth, pushing out as much air as you can while contracting your abdominal muscles. The hand on your stomach should move in as you exhale, but your other hand should move very little.
- Continue to breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth. Try to inhale enough so that your lower abdomen rises and falls. Count slowly as you exhale.

If you have a hard time breathing from your abdomen while sitting up, try lying on the floor. Put a small book on your stomach, and try to breathe so that the book rises as you inhale and falls as you exhale.

You'll benefit most by repeating your deep breathing on a regular basis. Remember that you don't have to spend a lot of time doing this, just 5 minutes every day can be enough to calm your stress levels and enable you to gain more perspective.

RETURNING TO CONTRACEPTION

Many women in their 30's still enjoy a great sex life with their partner, but aren't interested in increasing their family any further. After having a child it's important to consider how and when you want to return to contraception.

The first thing to remember is that you have lots of options. If you were on the pill before you had started your family then you might want to consider returning to this. However the type of pill that you were on before might not necessarily suit your lifestyle now and you may find that a different form of contraception will give you fewer side effects. You could also consider pills that are made with hormones that mimic the ones that occur naturally in your body.

Talk to your doctor or healthcare professional about your options and chose a contraceptive that feels in tune with you and your needs.

1. Based on http://savvyreader.typepad.com/my_weblog/2008/05/10-ways-to-reba.html accessed on 16/02/2010 at 18:19

2. Based on http://www.helpguide.org/mental/stress_relief_meditation_yoga_relaxation.htm section starting "Deep breathing for stress relief" accessed on 16/02/2010 at 18:21