

# Buteyko Practice Diary and Quick Reference Guide

Buteyko Breathing Association

[www.buteykobreathing.org](http://www.buteykobreathing.org)



# Welcome to Buteyko!

You may have had asthma or another breathing problem for years, but Buteyko is almost certainly going to be unlike anything you have tried before.

Buteyko is about regaining control of your breathing and giving you the skills to take back control of your own health.

At first it might seem strange. The idea that changing your breathing can improve your health may sound ridiculous! But once you begin to understand how it works, the benefits start to become obvious.

All you need at this stage is an open mind and a commitment to trying to help yourself.

Whether you have asthma or another breathing condition such as Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), learning Buteyko should help you to breathe more easily.



## How to use this book

This book is a practice diary for you to complete as you take your first steps in learning Buteyko with a trained teacher or physiotherapist. Also, you will find a reminder of the basic Buteyko techniques covered in this booklet, along with some helpful tips and ideas.

It is important to work through each section before moving on. Most of the breathing exercises appear simple and easy, but they can actually be quite tricky to master, so don't be tempted to jump ahead or rush through to the end.

In your first week of Buteyko, try to stick to the programme as closely as possible. The first week establishes important elements such as awareness of posture and relaxation, making the new exercises learned in the second week easier to master.

# Everyday practice is essential

Your breathing style has developed over many years and is as much a part of you as the way you walk. Imagine your breathing pattern is set by a sophisticated clock in the brain. The exercises help to reset this internal breathing clock to the correct time.

Changing your breathing pattern is rather like learning to ride a bike. You can talk about it, think about it or write about it but the only way to be successful is to practice, practice, practice!

Improving your breathing will not happen overnight, but by following the programme most people see positive results after just one week.



## Tips for successful practice

Finding time to practise Buteyko regularly can be a struggle. Here are a few simple ideas on how to make the most of your practice sessions.

**Choose the right place** - Buteyko exercises require focused concentration. Ideally you need somewhere quiet, with no distractions such as TV, music, mobile phones and pets. Make yourself comfortable, it is much easier to relax if the room is warm enough and you are wearing loose, comfortable clothes.

**Stick to a routine** - Choosing set times is great for regular practice and other people in your house will also get to know when you want to be by yourself.

**Think about what you want to achieve** - Setting one or two realistic goals can help to keep you committed.

## Write down your goals here!

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## Starting with nose breathing

Think about it - the nose is designed for breathing and the mouth is designed for eating, drinking and speaking! Your first challenge is to use only your nose for breathing, both in and out, *all* the time.

The nose isn't just the part you can see, there is a huge area behind it that acts as a super-efficient air-cleaning machine. This protects your lungs by:

- Filtering out dust, pollens, and allergens
- Humidifying the air to keep your lungs healthy and moist
- Warming the air to prevent cold air irritating your airways
- Sterilizing the air to kill bacteria and viruses

If your nose is feeling blocked, it is worth doing the nose clearing exercises below before starting your Buteyko practice Set. Nose breathe only.

### Nodding - ten repetitions

- 1 Nod your head backwards and forwards slowly. To get an idea of the speed, try silently counting slowly to three as your head moves backwards and then again as your head comes forwards.
- 2 Coordinate the nodding movement with your breathing. Breathe in as your head goes back and out as your head comes forwards. Remember to breathe smoothly, gently and as quietly as possible.

### Tipping - six repetitions

- 1 Take a normal breath in, breathe out gently and then hold your nose.
- 2 Tip your head backwards three to six times while holding your breath. This time the movement will need to be faster than before.
- 3 Release your nose and breathe in gently. Keep your mouth closed.

### Hold and Blow - six repetitions

- 1 Take a normal breath in, breathe out gently and hold your nose.
- 2 Increase the pressure at the back of your nose by trying to blow out gently. You don't need to make your cheeks blow out. You may feel your ears 'pop'.
- 3 Keep the gentle pressure going for a count of five and then breathe in again through your nose. Keep your mouth closed.

It's normal for one side of your nose to feel more blocked than the other. In fact you may notice that the blocked and unblocked sides alternate during the day. This is a natural phenomenon called the 'nasal cycle'. Remember, if you have to blow your nose, try not to trumpet, your nose is very delicate.



## Relaxed Breathing

- 1 Sit comfortably with a straight back, legs uncrossed and knees shoulder-width apart. Look slightly upwards or close your eyes.
- 2 Put your hands on your upper and lower chest and settle yourself by breathing smoothly and quietly through your nose.
- 3 Next, focus on those areas of your body where you feel movement as you breathe. Concentrate particularly on the area around your lower chest. Try to let go of these areas as much as possible and minimise the movement of your upper hand.
- 4 After a couple of minutes let your top hand rest down in your lap. Now relax the rest of your muscles such as those in your face and jaw, neck and shoulders, lower abdomen, hips and legs. You may begin to experience a slight feeling of a lack of air. This is good – it shows the exercise is working.
- 5 Continue gentle, relaxed breaths for around three minutes and then let your breathing return to normal. Keep breathing through your nose and notice a sense of lightness as you breathe.

## Finding your pulse

Some people find it helpful to check their pulse before and after each Set. The pulse can be found by resting two fingers about one centimetre below the wrist - in line with the thumb-side of the hand.

After the practice Set, if your pulse stays the same or goes down this indicates that you are relaxing. If your pulse goes up it suggests the exercise Set is encouraging you to breathe more, not less as intended.

## The Control Pause

The Control Pause (CP) has two functions. First as a measure of your progress and second as a quick way of producing a mild degree of “air hunger” at the start of each cycle of the Buteyko exercise Sets.

- 1 Take in a normal sized breath in and out through your nose. Hold your nose gently and start your stopwatch.
- 2 Hold your breath until you feel the first onset of a feeling of lack of air.
- 3 At this point release your nose, breathe in gently through your nose and stop the stopwatch.

If you need to open your mouth or use force to stop yourself breathing more deeply, then you have held your breath for too long.

Your starting Control Pause is: \_\_\_\_\_ seconds

## Week 1 Buteyko Set

All of the techniques learned in the first week are brought together in the Week 1 Set. Your Buteyko teacher will advise you on how many times you should repeat the cycle of “Control Pause immediately followed by Relaxed Breathing”. Note down your results in the diary chart on page 17.

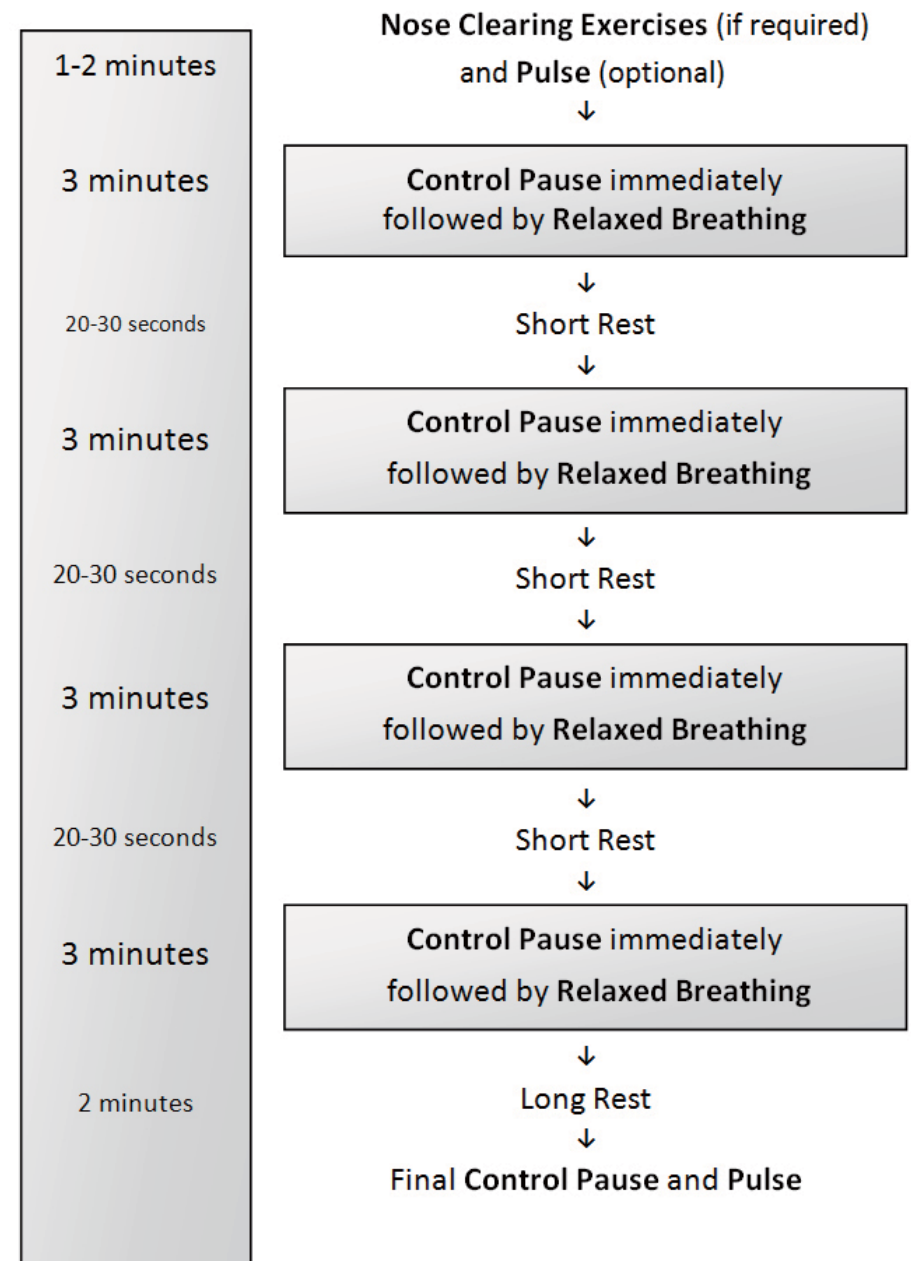
You should find that your final Control Pause is longer than your first Control Pause and that your final pulse measurement is the same or lower than the pulse measurement at the start. If this is not the case, note it down on the chart and mention it to your teacher at your next appointment.

## Three Sets a day

Practising three times a day may seem time-consuming initially, but remember that you are trying to change breathing habits that have become established over many years, and this will take time.

Ideally, Sets should be practised before breakfast, before lunch or dinner and before sleep. It is preferable not to practise immediately after meals.

## Week 1 Buteyko Set



## Daily nose-breathing walk

Take a fifteen minute daily walk (strictly nose-breathing and no talking allowed!) every day.

## An hour of taping

Since breathing is mostly unconscious, establishing a nose-breathing habit can be difficult. As soon as your mind is elsewhere your mouth automatically opens! Using paper-tape can help reinforce the new habit.

Coat your lips with lip-salve and put a small piece of white paper-tape across your mouth. You should aim to tape for an hour a day, perhaps while you are working on the computer, watching TV or reading a book. This is an easy Buteyko exercise.



## The first week

We are all used to the idea that physical exercise can leave you aching and stiff. In the same way Buteyko exercises, which may not seem very demanding, can cause a number of temporary side effects such as a runny nose or headaches. If you experience any problems reduce the number of Sets you practise each day and tell your Buteyko teacher at your next appointment.

## Self Assessment Week 1

If you have noticed any changes after the first week, note them here:

**Progress?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Problems?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Questions?** \_\_\_\_\_

## Managing medication

Even if you are feeling much better after practising the exercises, you must continue to take your prescribed preventative medication until you have spoken to your doctor. However, many people learning Buteyko find that they can reduce the amount of rescue inhaler that they are taking. One way to achieve this is using the Mini Pause technique.

## Mini pauses for everyday situations

Attacks of breathlessness can begin with little warning and sometimes allergens such as cat hair or cigarette smoke are the cause. But sometimes, the attack can be the result of a change in breathing style.

For example, many people find that when they are enjoying themselves or laughing out loud, they become breathless and need a puff of their rescue inhaler. You may also have noticed that symptoms can be triggered by walking uphill, coughing or even talking on the telephone.

All these situations can cause people to breathe too much. You have been breathing like an elephant when you should have been breathing like a mouse! At the first sign of breathlessness, instead of taking your rescue inhaler, try a set of Mini Pauses.

- 1 Take small 'mouse' breaths through your nose in the following sequence:
  - Breathe in – out – pause for 1 count
  - Breathe in – out – pause for 2 counts
  - Breathe in – out – pause for 3 counts
  - Breathe in – out – pause for 2 counts
  - Breathe in – out – pause for 1 count
- 2 As you become confident with Buteyko you can increase the length of the sequence and hold the pauses for longer.
- 3 You can repeat the Mini pauses for up to five minutes. If you still feel breathless after the Mini pause Set, then use your rescue inhaler as normal.

## Buteyko Stop Cough

For many people coughing can start or worsen symptoms. Where the cough is dry and tickly the Buteyko advice is simple: Don't cough! The more you cough the more you will feel like coughing!

At first it will be difficult to overcome the desire to cough. For many years you may have been coughing just to "get it over with" or because you feel it is out of your control.

A dry cough is a type of irritation that can be caused by several factors including cold, dry or fast-moving air hitting the throat. Once you have coughed, you will often feel the need to take a big breath and cough again. By doing this you are effectively "feeding" the cough as each big breath further irritates the lungs and throat and stimulates a cough.

The Stop-Cough exercise is designed to help reduce your over-sensitive cough reflex. If you can reduce the air flow and keep the air around the throat warm and moist it is often possible to stop a coughing fit early.

- 1 At the first sign of a tickle or as soon as you cough, or feel you are about to cough, put your hand over your mouth.
- 2 Swallow once.
- 3 Hold your breath for a few seconds. When you start breathing again take slow, smooth breaths for at least 30 seconds, while keeping your hand over your mouth.
- 4 Tell yourself that you are not going to cough.
- 5 Finally, take a smooth, normal-sized breath through your nose and take your hand away from your mouth.
- 6 If you still feel a tickle in your throat, repeat the exercise from the beginning until the 'tickle' has subsided.

Caution: The Stop-Cough exercise is not for dealing with productive coughing. If you start to cough up anything other than small amounts of clear mucus, you should see your doctor.

## Week 2: Breathing even less

During the second week the focus is on breathing slightly less than before. A key aim is to become accustomed to a slight feeling of "air hunger" lasting several minutes.

One way to do this is using the Extended Pause exercise - which introduces the concept of increasing air hunger. You will be asked to hold your breath a little longer than is comfortable. As you practise this exercise you will find that the stronger feeling of air hunger you experience will become more familiar and less threatening to you.

### Extended Pause

- 1 Take a normal breath in, breathe out and hold your nose.
- 2 Hold your breath for an extra 5-10 seconds beyond your Control Pause whilst using a distraction technique, such as moving in your chair or walking.
- 3 Release your nose, making sure that you breathe in through your nose as quietly as possible.
- 4 Immediately start your Reduced Breathing (see next page) and relax into the feeling of air hunger.

Caution: Check with your Buteyko teacher before practising this exercise if you have high blood pressure, a heart condition, epilepsy, diabetes or another health problem.



## Avoiding colds and flu

Colds and flu can make asthma symptoms worse for a short time. The main way you get a cold is not from people sneezing in your face but your hands coming into contact with viruses.

Washing your hands regularly or using an alcohol gel can help you to avoid catching colds and flu.

## Reduced Breathing

The Reduced Breathing exercise involves breathing slightly less air whilst keeping your body, especially your breathing muscles, relaxed.

- 1 Make sure you are sitting comfortably and breathing through your nose.
- 2 Begin with a Control Pause and move into Reduced Breathing.
- 3 Become aware of the natural pause between the breaths and rest without breathing for about one second between breaths. Relax into the feeling of slight air hunger. Focus particularly on the muscles around your lower chest and abdomen.
- 4 Be aware of the size and speed of your breathing. Put your finger just under your nose and you may find you can slightly reduce or slow down the flow of air entering and leaving your nostrils. Allow the feeling of air hunger to build, but don't let it get too much. Sometimes wriggling and stretching your muscles can help to release any muscle tension that develops as a result of the lack of air.
- 5 Keep this Reduced Breathing pattern going and then let your breathing return to normal without taking any deep breaths.

## Night-time nose breathing

If you have been practising an hour of taping for at least a week and feel comfortable with tape, you can try taping your lips at night.

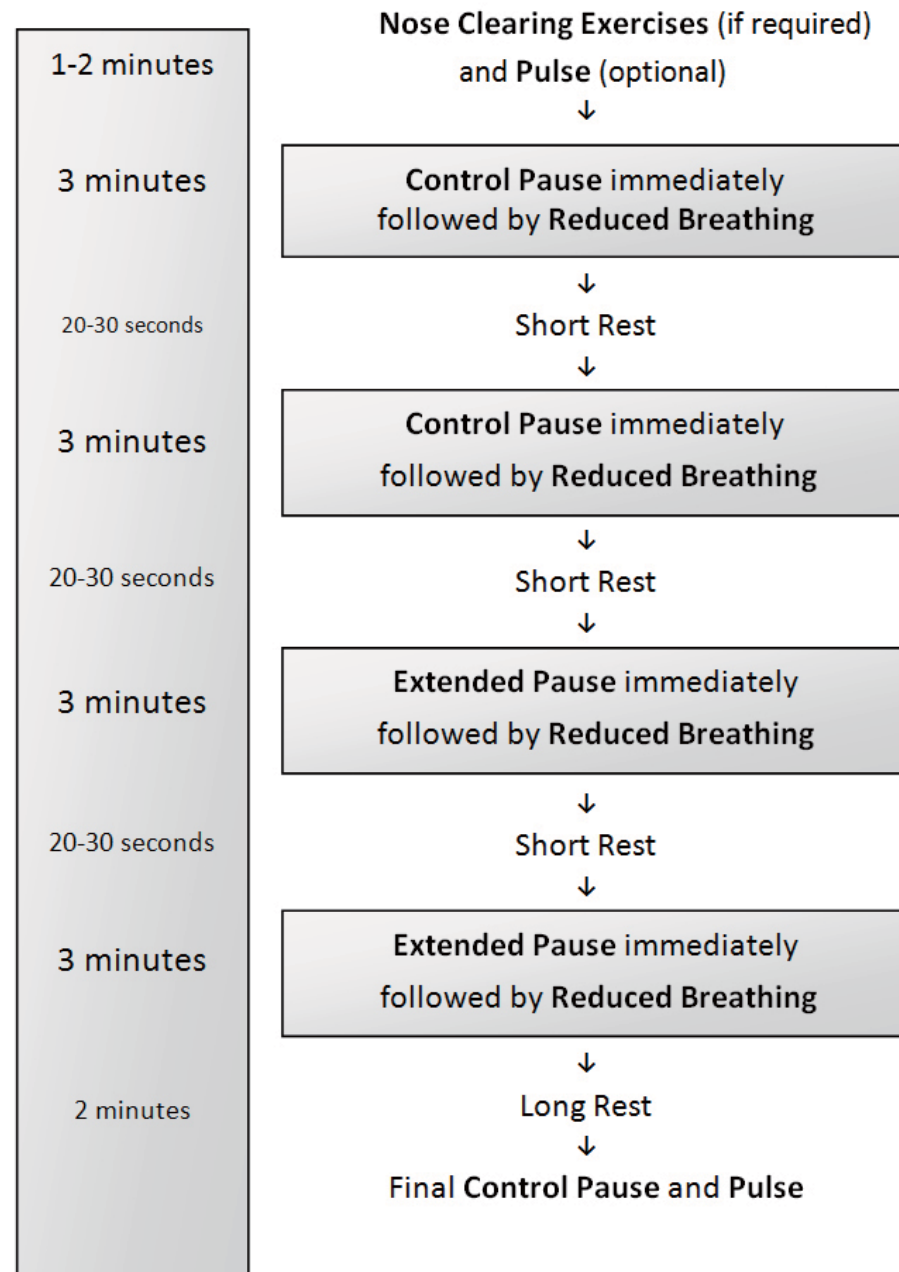
Nose-breathing is so important that it helps if you can breathe through your nose even while asleep. This is an optional Buteyko technique which many people, especially those with asthma, have found helpful in reducing symptoms upon waking.

Do not tape if you have been drinking, feel unwell, or are taking sedative medication.

## Week 2 Set

Here in the Week 2 Set, Reduced Breathing takes the place of Relaxed Breathing and two Extended Pauses are included in place of Control Pauses.

## Week 2 Buteyko Set



## Self Assessment Week 2

Progress?

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Problems?

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Questions?

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## Continuing into Weeks 3 and 4

It is important to keep going with the exercises. Over the next two weeks of practice you will learn how to fine-tune your breathing to the point where you are hardly breathing at all when you practise the exercises.

In weeks 3 and 4, a further stage of Reduced Breathing can be used called Very Reduced Breathing. Some people prefer to continue with Reduced Breathing and that is fine.

The structure of the Set used during Weeks 3 and 4 is the same as the Week 2 Set except Very Reduced Breathing is practised in the place of Reduced Breathing.



## Eyelid Reflex

Some people find this exercise is helpful to achieve Very Reduced Breathing.

- 1 Keeping the chin and head still, the eyes are tipped back as far as possible.
- 2 Keep your eyes open, if possible, for about 15 seconds and then close them and rest.

## Very Reduced Breathing

- 1 Practise Reduced Breathing with hands on upper and lower chest and allow your breathing to reduce to less than normal volume - settle into this pattern.
- 2 Become aware of the natural pause between breaths. Allow the length of the pause to slightly increase.
- 3 Focus on the feeling of the pause and 'rest in the pause' taking small breaths when needed. One or both hands are lowered onto the lap, allowing the shoulders to relax.
- 4 Imagine that new air only moves as far as your upper chest.
- 5 Further reduce your breathing - imagining new air only moves as far as your throat.
- 6 Use the eyelid reflex once.
- 7 Be aware of the coolness of the air in the nose as if you are occasionally gently sniffing the air. Breathing should be almost imperceptible.

## Resetting

As you make progress with your reduced breathing you may find that you experience a sudden feeling that it has become much easier to breathe less.

This can come as a surprise and at first it may seem odd that you can be breathing so little and yet still feel quite comfortable. Rest assured that this is not a sign that you are about to stop breathing completely; it is purely another indication that your breathing is adapting to a new healthy level.

## Self Assessment Week 3

Progress?

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Problems?

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Questions?

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## Week 3, 4 and beyond

Dr Buteyko strongly believed that his method was not just for treating symptoms, but also a route to better health. Although the Buteyko technique is 90% to do with changing the way you breathe there are other things you can do to improve your condition.

### Exercise regularly

Choose an activity like walking or swimming where you are in complete control of the pace of the activity. Breathe through your nose all the time – if you get so breathless that you feel desperate to open your mouth then stop, get your breath under control by breathing through your nose, and then carry on a bit more slowly.

Take several weeks to increase the level of your activity. In other words don't try to run before you can walk – literally! As you get more experienced you can begin to use some of the Buteyko techniques such as Reduced Breathing while you exercise.

Remember, the general idea is always to keep your breathing to the minimum required. If you have a rescue inhaler remember to take it with you when you exercise in case you find it hard to control your breathing.



### Avoid allergens

People with asthma are only too aware of the things that trigger their symptoms. Common examples are house dust, pets, pollen, smoke, moulds, perfumes and certain foods.

The problem is that some allergens and triggers are easier to avoid than others. However, there are some simple steps that you can take to avoid exposure. For example if you are sensitive to moulds then it makes sense to keep your house well ventilated and treat visible signs of mould vigorously. Also keeping soft furnishings to a minimum and using a vacuum cleaner with a HEPA filter can reduce levels of dust in the home.

## Lose those extra pounds and eat well

Eat in moderation, but drink plenty of water. A large meal needs a lot of energy to digest, to generate that energy requires oxygen and so your breathing will increase. That's why you will often find your Control Pause is lower, and the breathing exercises are harder, after a large meal.

Focus on eating a wide variety of vegetables and grains in your diet, together with some fruit, and small portions of meat and oily fish. Dr Buteyko used to recommend porridge made with either oats or millet as an aid to digestion and as a useful food for controlling your weight.



Use sea-salt rather than normal table salt as this is a useful supply of minerals. If you have suffered with breathing problems for many years it can be useful to take a liquid vitamin and mineral supplement for a month or two.

Consider the possibility that some of your symptoms may be connected to food intolerance, a small minority of people can benefit from identifying and excluding certain foods. Ask your teacher for more information on this topic.

### Look after your teeth and feet!

Dr Buteyko believed that poor dental hygiene, leading to infected teeth and gums, was a cause of significant stress on the body and could hold back people's progress with the breathing exercises. He also believed that the same was true for other chronic infections such as athlete's foot.

### Improve the way you handle stress

Some feelings such as sudden tiredness, tension, a pounding heart and even breathlessness may actually be symptoms of anxiety, rather than asthma. Learning to distinguish between the two is time well spent. If you are regularly stressed, consult your Buteyko teacher for instruction on ways to relax.

Remember that success comes one step at a time, so congratulate yourself now on reading to the end of this booklet. Good breathing!

# Practice Diary, Days 1-7

Day	CP on waking	Practice sets	Pulse	CP1	CP2	CP3	CP4	Final Pulse	Final CP	Daily walk	Tape for one hour	Comments
1		Morning										
		Daytime										
		Evening										
2		Morning										
		Daytime										
		Evening										
3		Morning										
		Daytime										
		Evening										
4		Morning										
		Daytime										
		Evening										
5		Morning										
		Daytime										
		Evening										
6		Morning										
		Daytime										
		Evening										
7		Morning										
		Daytime										
		Evening										

# Practice Diary, Days 8-14

Day	CP on waking	Practice sets	Pulse	CP1	CP2	EP1	EP2	Final Pulse	Final CP	Daily walk	Tape	Comments
8		Morning										
		Daytime										
		Evening										
9		Morning										
		Daytime										
		Evening										
10		Morning										
		Daytime										
		Evening										
11		Morning										
		Daytime										
		Evening										
12		Morning										
		Daytime										
		Evening										
13		Morning										
		Daytime										
		Evening										
14		Morning										
		Daytime										
		Evening										

# Practice Diary, Days 15-21

Day	CP on waking	Practice sets	Pulse	CP1	CP2	EP1	EP2	Final Pulse	Final CP	Daily walk	Tape	Comments
15		Morning										
		Daytime										
		Evening										
16		Morning										
		Daytime										
		Evening										
17		Morning										
		Daytime										
		Evening										
18		Morning										
		Daytime										
		Evening										
19		Morning										
		Daytime										
		Evening										
20		Morning										
		Daytime										
		Evening										
21		Morning										
		Daytime										
		Evening										

# Practice Diary, Days 22-28

Day	CP on waking	Practice sets	Pulse	CP1	CP2	EP1	EP2	Final Pulse	Final CP	Daily walk	Tape	Comments
22		Morning										
		Daytime										
		Evening										
23		Morning										
		Daytime										
		Evening										
24		Morning										
		Daytime										
		Evening										
25		Morning										
		Daytime										
		Evening										
26		Morning										
		Daytime										
		Evening										
27		Morning										
		Daytime										
		Evening										
28		Morning										
		Daytime										
		Evening										

# Self Assessment Week 4

Progress?

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Problems?

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Questions?

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## What now?

Talk to your Buteyko teacher, it may be helpful for you to continue some Buteyko practice for a few more weeks.

Gradually you will find that the Buteyko techniques and principles naturally integrate into your life and as they do so you will become more confident that you can control your breathing, rather than it controlling you.

## Feedback

Have you achieved your goals? (check back to page 2)

Completely / Mostly / Not at all

Has your Control Pause increased? (check back to page 5)

Yes / No

Have you found Buteyko beneficial?

Yes / No

If yes, what aspects of the technique did you find the most helpful?

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# Appointments and Notes

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# The Buteyko Shop

**Self Help Asthma:** This DVD, CD and 64 page handbook pack contains everything you need to learn Buteyko and take control of your breathing. £29



## **Breathe Well booklet:**

Five steps to healthier breathing for people with asthma, COPD and other breathing problems. £3.50

**Buteyko Practice Diary:** Quick reference guide and diary to help with learning the technique. £3.50 (or £2 each if buying ten)



[www.thebuteykoshop.co.uk](http://www.thebuteykoshop.co.uk)



**Buteyko Breathing Association**

The Buteyko Breathing Association is a non-profit making organisation committed to improving the health of asthmatics and those with breathing-related problems. Buteyko Breathing Association teachers are health professionals who have been trained to teach Dr Buteyko's breathing exercises.

A new approach to asthma  
for the 21st century

[www.buteykobreathing.org](http://www.buteykobreathing.org)

