

Pranayama and the Energy Body

Lecture

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The Five Koshas

				
Anamaya Kosha The physical body (bones, muscles, organs)	Pranamaya Kosha The energetic body (nervous system, prana, nadis)	Manomaya Kosha The everyday uncontrolled mind and emotions	Vijnanamaya Kosha The witness conscious, awareness of the self & other koshas	Anandamaya Kosha The bliss inherent in ourselves, our connection with the divine

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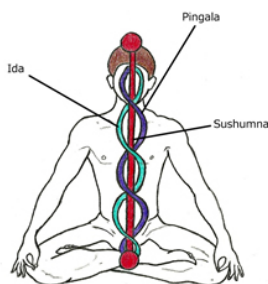
Pranamaya Kosha: The Energy Body



- Prana is the vital force that is present in the air that we breath, whole food that we eat, and in sunlight. It is what keeps us alive and enlivens every cell in the body.
- There are 72,000 nadis, or rivers, in the body according to the Tantric texts, and they channel prana to every cell.
 - When these channels are open, and prana can flow through them, then the body is full of health and vitality.
 - When the distribution of prana is blocked, illness or injury may result

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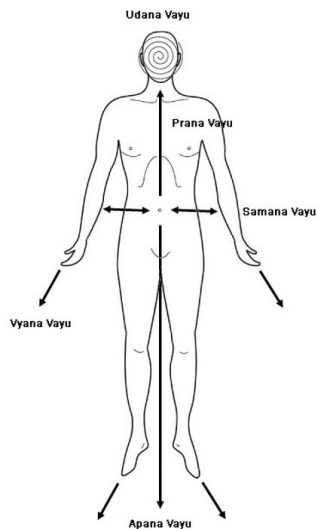
Ida, Pingala & Sushumna Nadi



- **Sushumna Nadi** - Central channel
 - Chakras aligned here
- **Ida Nadi** - Moon channel, feminine aspect, left nostril, right brain hemisphere (creative).
 - Spirals to the left from Muladhara to Sahasrara
- **Pingala Nadi** - Sun channel, male aspect, right nostril, left brain hemisphere (analytic)
 - Spirals to the left from Muladhara to Sahasrara
 - Ida and pingala cross at chakras and move prana up and down throughout the chakra system

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The Five Vayus

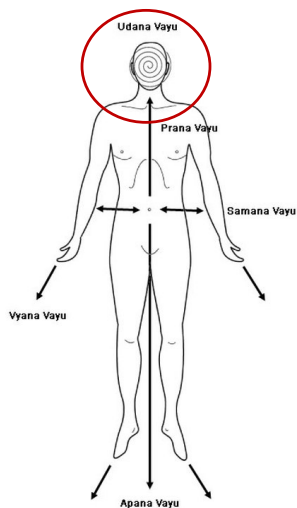


• The vayus are the five winds, or currents of energy in the body. They help to circulate prana throughout all the systems of the body and maintain their optimal functioning.

1. Udana
2. Prana
3. Samana
4. Apana
5. Vyana

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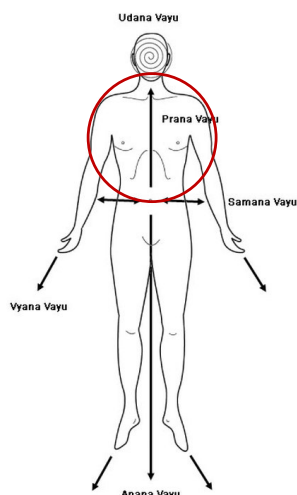
Udana Vayu



- Circulates energy in the throat and head and is associated with speech and memory.
- It can be experienced by inhaling and imagining energy circulating throughout the head.
- Udana Vayu activities:
 - Seeing, hearing, speaking, thinking, tasting and smelling

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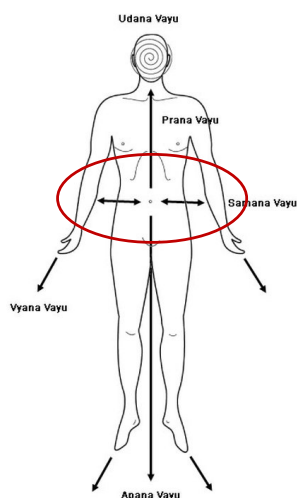
Prana Vayu



- Circulates energy in the chest and moves upwards.
- It is associated with respiration and can be felt as you inhale imagining the breath moving upwards from the chest toward the head.
- Prana Vayu activities:
 - Eating, drinking and breathing

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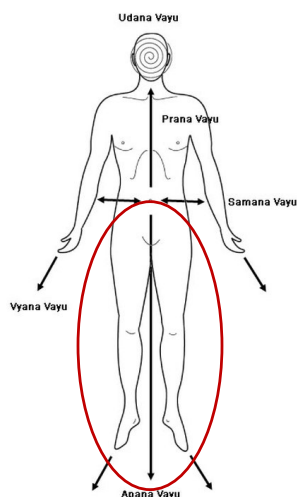
Samana Vayu



- Circulates energy in the abdomen and is associated with digestion and assimilation.
- Experience it by inhaling from the periphery of the body towards the abdomen and exhaling from the abdomen towards the periphery.
- Samana Vayu activities
 - Digesting

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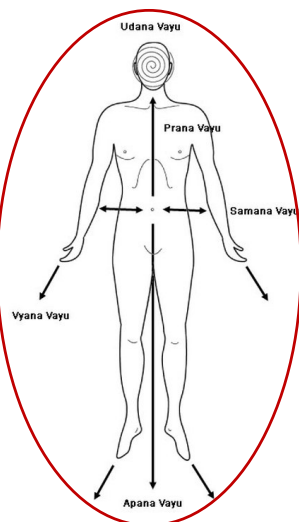
Apana Vayu



- Circulates energy from the pelvis to the feet and is associated with elimination and childbirth.
- It can be experienced by exhaling and imagining the energy moving downwards from the crown of the head to the feet.
- Apana Vayu activities:
 - Exhaling, eliminating, and sweating
 - Menstruating and childbirth also

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Vyana Vayu



- Moves energy throughout the whole body and is associated with circulation.
- Experience it by inhaling and expanding from the center of the chest out toward the periphery of the body and exhaling from the periphery back toward the center.
- Vyana vayu helps to coordinate all the other vayus.

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Breathing is NOT 'One Size Fits All'

- Our respiratory process naturally maintains balance between oxygen and carbon dioxide and the body needs both of these in order to function
- Many factors affect our natural breathing patterns:
 - ✓ Biology
 - ✓ Posture
 - ✓ Trauma
 - ✓ Activity
 - ✓ Illnesses
 - ✓ Medication
 - ✓ Mood
- The suggested benefits here may not have the same effect on each person.
- Try the technique, monitor the effects, and adjust as necessary

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Physical Benefits of Conscious Breath



- Breathing fuels consumption of oxygen and glucose to energize muscle contractions, improve glandular function, and improve mental processes
- Helps the organs detoxify the lymph and blood by promoting circulation
- Neutralizes lactic acid
- Purifies the nadis and 6000 miles of nerves in body are kept clear

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Mental Benefits of Conscious Breath

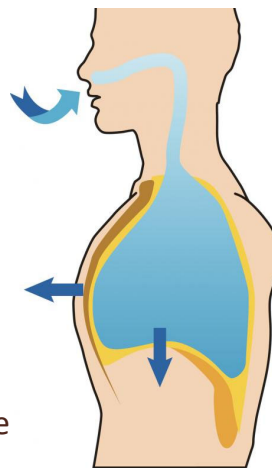
- Forms a bridge between conscious and unconscious mental states
- Tames unconscious worry so that energy can be redirected into other activities
- “The breath frees the mind from the grasp of the body.” [*Light on Pranayama, B.K.S. Iyengar*](#)
- Calms overstimulated senses and quells desires and mental obsession
- Promotes present moment awareness, [*Hatha Yoga Pradipika 1:49*](#)
- Pranayama is the “maha tapas” or great austerity and “daily practice ensures success and perfects consciousness” [*Siva Samhita, IV 17/18*](#)
- Prepares mind and body for meditation



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Puraka (Inhale) Tips

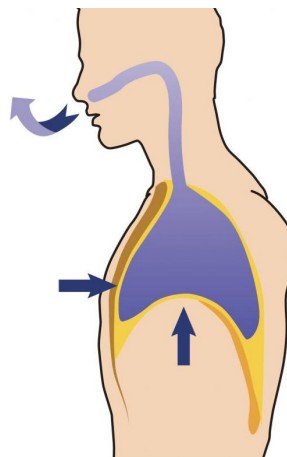
- Expand chest up and out
- Fill lungs from the bottom to the top, and from the center to the periphery
- Keep shoulders relaxed, do not lift scapulae
- Keep throat, tongue and jaw relaxed
- Keep awareness on the space between Manipura and Vishuddha chakras
- In-breath is absorbed by the cells in the form of prana



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Rechaka (Exhale) Tips

- Exhale from the top of the chest to below the navel
- Keep constant control over the intercostal muscles as you exhale
- Do not slouch on the exhale, keep spine lifted and chest open
- Passively exhaling calms the nervous system



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Nostril Dominance

- At any given moment, we breathe more through one nostril than the other
 - Changes between right and left nostril every 2 to 2.5 hours, has a subtle impact on the nervous system
 - When RIGHT nostril is dominant - good time to eat as agni is more active
 - When LEFT nostril is dominant - good time to sleep
- Controlled by the nervous system
 - Swelling of nasal tissue is a stress (SNS) response
 - Shrinking of nasal tissue is a relaxation (PNS) response

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Breath Rate & Aging

- NORMAL RATE:
 - 15 x per minute : 900 x per hour : 21,600 x per day
 - 2 second inhale/2 second exhale
- Yogis believe we only have a certain number of breaths in a lifetime and that slowing down the breath slows the ageing process; related to heart rate
- Lung cells contract as we age and can take in less oxygen, pranayama slows this process
- Texts suggest 80 rounds of (inhale-pause-exhale-pause) breath in early morning, noon, evening and midnight
 - 15 min per day minimum

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When Not to Practice Pranayama



- ✗ Do not practice when angry, right after eating, when overly tired
- ✗ Don't press tongue against roof of mouth
- ✗ Never force the breath and always go back to natural breath if you feel agitated.

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Pranayama

Practice

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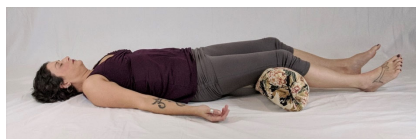
How to Prepare for Pranayama



- Begin with Asana practice to make lung tissue and intercostal muscles more supple which promotes fuller breathing
- Body is an unbaked clay pot (kumbha) hardened by asana
 - Asana is not a 'stand alone' practice as it is often portrayed in the West
- Relax in Savasana after pranayama for a few minutes

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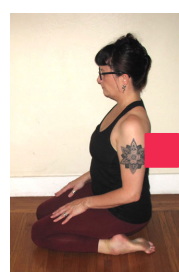
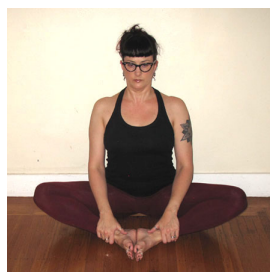
Reclining Pranayama Tips



- ✓ Begin pranayama practice reclining until you develop the ability to comfortably support yourself seated
 - Supported Savasana
 - Pranayama-fold blanket (with blanket folded in half twice, hold folded edge and fold like a fan with largest section on bottom, narrow fold on top, Sit on floor in front of it and lay back, tuck end under for head)
- ✓ Close eyes, look toward heart, open ears, relax throat

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Seated Pranayama Tips



- ✓ Practice seated with a 'still spine' and a stable mind'
 - Siddhasana, Swastikasana, Virasana, Baddha Konasana
 - Can use block between shoulder blades and wall for additional support
- ✓ Close eyes, look toward heart, open ears, relax throat
- ✓ Progress slowly to avoid ill physical, energetic or mental effects

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Strap-Assisted Breathing



Breathe Inside Strap

- Tie strap around torso at level of solar plexus
 - Encourages focus for Madhyama Svasa and lateral/peripheral movement of diaphragm
 - Try breathing in each side, front/back, or quadrants



Rope Jacket

- Place center of strap on back at base of shoulder blades. **Bring forward under armpits, up in front of shoulders, back down and cross behind scapulae, then tie off in front of solar plexus**
 - Works best with 8' buckled strap
 - Encourages correct seated posture

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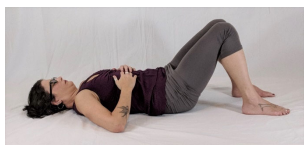
Three-Part Breath

Can be used as part of a client intake to not breath awareness and areas of tightness



Adhama Svasa

- Breathe into lower belly
- Soothing, calming



Madhyama Svasa

- Breathe wide into low ribs
- Slightly energizing



Adya Svasa

- Breathe under collarbones
- Lifts emotions, lightens heart

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Purna Svasa



Full Yogic Breath

Sit or recline; inhale from the bottom of the torso to the top, filling the belly, lower ribs and chest slowly and smoothly. Exhale and release from the top to the bottom slowly and smoothly

Imagine the prana in your breath filling the 'pot' of the torso from the bottom to the top as you inhale, and from the top to the bottom as you exhale. Or use the image of an elevator car moving up and down Sushumna Nadi.

- **Physical Benefits:** Maximizes inhalation and exhalation, promotes breath control, corrects poor breathing habits, increases oxygen intake; helpful for neuropathy and lymphedema
- **Vayus:** Prana, Apana, and Samana, Vyana vayus
- **Emotional:** Promotes calm, eases anxiety
- **Mental:** Encourages concentration and focus
- **Practice Tips:** Practice 5-10 minutes

"I inhale and exhale fully"

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Rechaka Kumbhaka



'Empty Pot' or Exhale Retention

Inhale through nostrils, then exhale completely through nostrils and pause after the exhalation holding the breath out. The length of the pause should be comfortable to maintain. Take several breaths between retentions when learning to avoid strain.

Imagine that you are emptying the kumbha (pot) of your torso as you breathe out. What might you need to release at this time?

- **Physical Benefits:** Relaxing, hypertension, promotes more complete exhale and fuller inhale
- **Vayus:** Apana vayu
- **Emotional:** Anxiety, promotes ease and stillness
- **Mental:** Stills the senses and quiets the mind
- **Practice Tips:** Master Sama Vritti (equal ratio) and Antara Kumbhaka (inhale retention) first. Retention may happen naturally (kevala) or intentionally (sahita).
- **Contraindications:** Depression and low blood pressure

"I rest in the stillness"

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Chandra Bhedana



Moon Breath

PSYCHIC: Imagine inhaling and exhaling through the LEFT nostril.

DIGITAL: Close the right nostril to inhale and exhale through the LEFT nostril.

- **Physical Benefits:** Cooling, relaxing, calming and soothing, eases nasal allergies, stimulates parasympathetic nervous system
- **Emotional:** Reduces stress
- **Mental:** Draws cool calming energy in and out through the left nostril to activate Ida nadi and the right hemisphere of the brain and creative thought
- **Practice Tips:** May add retentions and/or vent open nostril.

Imagine cooling silver-blue moonlight flowing into the left nostril and throughout the left side of the body.

"I bathe in cool calming moonlight"

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Surya Bhedana



Sun Breath

PSYCHIC: Imagine inhaling and exhaling through the RIGHT nostril, subtler than digital

DIGITAL: Close the left nostril to inhale and exhale through the RIGHT nostril.

Imagine warming golden sunlight flowing into the right nostril and throughout the right side of the body.

- **Physical Benefits:** Gently warming, and energizing, eases nasal allergies, slightly stimulates sympathetic nervous system, may stimulate appetite
- **Mental:** Draws warm energy in and out through the right nostril to activate pingala nadi and the left hemisphere of the brain
- **Practice Tips:** May add retentions and/or vent open nostril
- **Contraindications:** Hypertension, when in treatment, use caution

"I bathe in warm sunlight"

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Nadi Shodhana



Alternate Nostril Breath

PSYCHIC: Use your imagination to *Inhale LEFT, Exhale RIGHT, Inhale RIGHT, Exhale LEFT*; best done reclining and more subtle than digital
DIGITAL: Close the nostrils to *Inhale LEFT, Exhale RIGHT, Inhale RIGHT, Exhale LEFT*; best done seated; stronger effect

- **Physical Benefits:** Purifies Ida and Pingala nadis, balances the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems, promotes immunity
- **Emotional:** Stabilizes mood
- **Mental:** Increases communication between the right and left hemispheres of the brain
- **Practice Tips:** May add retentions and/or vent open nostril.

Imagine cooling silver-blue moonlight and golden sunlight balanced in the body.

"I am balanced"

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Kaki



Beak

Create a beak with your lips like you were drinking through a straw. Inhale through pursed lips, close mouth and exhale through nostrils.

Imagine the coolness of the breath bathing the mouth, throat and stomach.

- **Physical Benefits:** Tonic for the body and mind, reduces fatigue and restlessness, eases acid reflux and nausea, purifies the blood, eases pain
- **Vayus:** All vayus
- **Emotional:** Cools anger
- **Practice Tips:** Practice 5-10 minutes
- **Variations:** May add Nasikgara Drishti during inhalation (gaze at tip of nose)
- **Contraindications:** Heart disease, low blood pressure, depression, chronic constipation

"My breath cools and heals"

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