



RELAXATION TECHNIQUES

Life is stressful enough on its own. The symptoms of menopause can certainly add to the stress. But it doesn't have to be that way.

There are many proven ways to take the pressure off, and they can help with the symptoms and stress that menopause can trigger. Getting exercise is a very effective way to relieve stress and should be part of your life as you go through menopause. Acupuncture and massage helps ease tensions for some women. Many women enjoy the relaxation benefits of yoga or tai chi, as well.

But there are things you can do nearly any time to help yourself relax. Let's look at a few simple things you can probably do in your home.

One of the best ways to infuse your body and mind with peaceful sensations is to take control of your breathing. To get the full benefit of a breathing exercise, find a place where you can clear your mind of distractions and where you can sit comfortably. If music helps you relax, choose something that is peaceful and serene.

- **Rhythmic breathing:** Inhale slowly, then exhale slowly. Try counting to five as you inhale, and again as you exhale. Pay attention to how your body is changing as your breath fills you, then leaves your body.
- **Deep breathing:** Focus on your navel. Breathe in slowly, directing your breath to that spot. As you inhale, let the air fill upward, into your chest and up into your shoulders. Then exhale as though you were a balloon being deflated. Repeat this and notice how your body responds.
- **Visualized breathing:** Once you're comfortably seated, close your eyes. As you breathe in slowly, imagine relaxation entering your body and stress leaving it. Keep a natural, easy rhythm as you breathe deeply, and visualize your breath traveling through your body as you do so, filling you up, then rushing out as you exhale. With every inhale, imagine you are bringing in more relaxation, and with every exhale, imagine that you are pushing out more stress.
- **Progressive muscle relaxation:** Concentrate on your own breathing, inhaling and exhaling slowly and deeply. In your mind, give yourself a physical examination as you do this. What areas feel tense or tight? Focus your breath on these areas as you inhale, and imagine the stress leaving these areas as you exhale. You might find it helpful to start at your toes and move up, gradually letting each muscle relax as you breathe in and out.