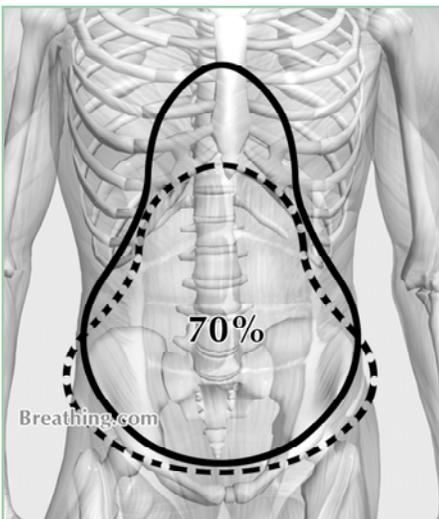
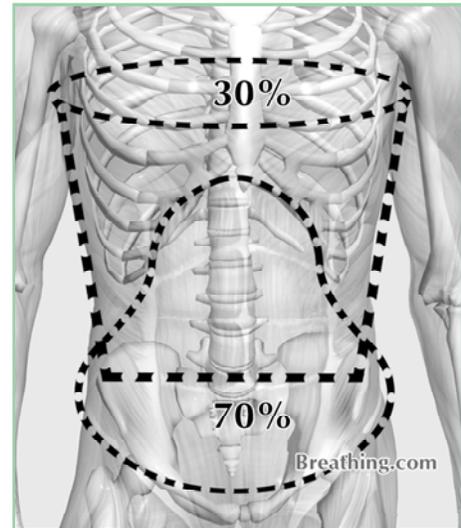


Supporting a More Optimal Breathing Pattern:

The Pear + the Cone = the Wave

An optimal deep breath starts with the lungs filling and the diaphragm descending. The lower torso expands in all directions (70%), then the ribs and chest expand (30%). The inhalation is fuller and slower, engaging the entire torso in an upward wave-like motion. The exhalation is simply about relaxing and deflating, followed by a brief pause before the next breath begins.

----- Inhale (lungs full)

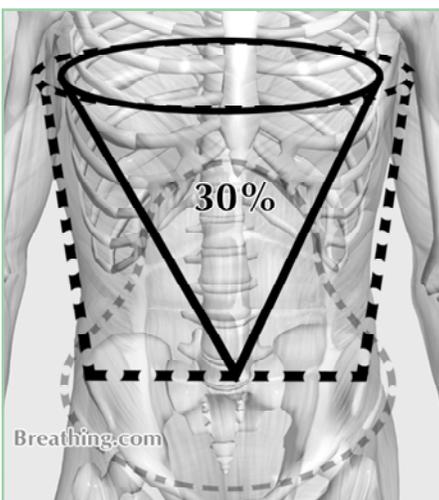


The Pear...

Imagine a pear hanging from your collarbones. Your diaphragm lies on top of the lower, round portion of the pear, and rises and falls with each breath. At the end of an exhale, the diaphragm rests up inside your ribs in its natural, dome shape. During an inhale, as your lungs fill, the top of the pear is pushed down and the diaphragm flattens. This causes the lower, round part of the pear (stomach, liver, intestines) to expand outward 360 degrees.

The soft tissue of the abdomen will expand more than the sides (intercostal muscles) and more than your lower back and kidney areas, but you should still feel expansion in your sides and back—although you may not, due to low-back tension. This primary *pear movement* should account for about 70% of the volume of your in-breath, since most of your lung tissue is in the lower half of your torso. Indeed, the lungs hang down about 20% more in the back like the tails on a tuxedo)...

————— Exhale (resting)
----- Inhale (lungs full)

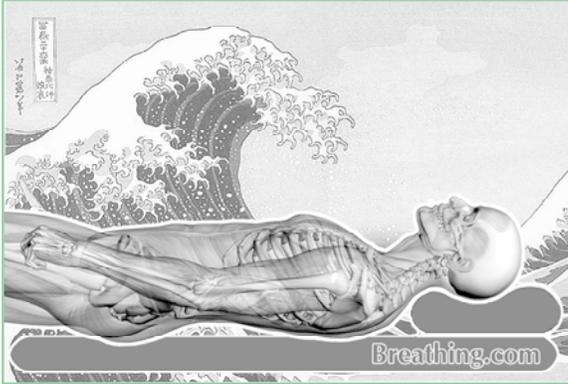


+ the Cone

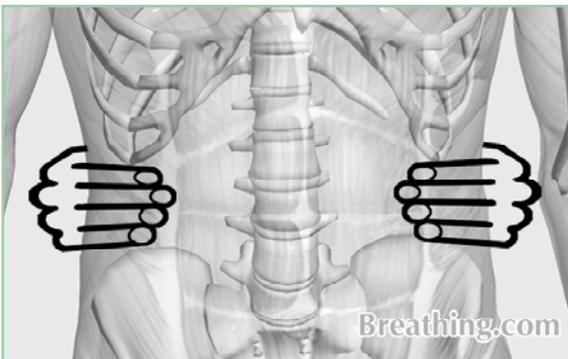
After the pear is filled, the breath will naturally rise up to open the ribs and expand the chest. This is the secondary movement of the inhale, which accounts for about 30% of its volume. Imagine a cone with the point anchored at your navel. The upper circle of the cone is approximately at your nipples. First the pear, then the cone enlarge in a wave-like movement upward. The ribs expand because the lungs need more space for a deeper breath. The circle of the cone opens wider as the ribs spread sideways—but not upward.

The cone is anchored at the navel. It will expand at the bottom, but not lose its foundation. If the ribs were lifted upward during an inhale by shrugging the shoulders or bulging the neck muscles, the circle at the top of the cone might even decrease in diameter, restricting your air volume intake. Tension would accumulate from doing shoulder shrugs and tensing the neck muscles about 18,000 times a day! This could lead to “high-chest dominant” or “reverse breathing,” where the abdomen GOES IN during an inhale. The ideal is to keep your shoulders and neck at rest and allow your ribs to widen sideways. There can be a gentle rippling movement in the shoulders and neck muscles as the inhale peaks.

= the Wave



The merging of the pear and cone as one continuous movement creates a marvelous wave that first fills the belly, then rises into the thorax. You can harmonize the breath wave with the spinal wave. The gentle undulation of the spine will encourage the flow of spinal fluid, lubricating your spinal discs. Since the majority of your activity and attention should be in your lower torso, you will be stimulating the vagus nerve and the parasympathetic (calming) side of your autonomic nervous system. Like an ocean wave, when your inhale comes to its peak, it will spill its momentum on the shore, with your free and relaxed exhale. You may feel inclined to pause before your next inhale, because you will be oxygenated and refreshed.



The Squeeze & Breathe Exercise

To strengthen the diaphragm from within, perform the breath wave while placing a little extra pressure with your hands in the soft tissue between your hips and your ribs. Place your four fingers in the front and your thumbs in the back over your kidneys. Do this while standing with your feet shoulder-width apart, knees slightly bent, chin slightly raised above the horizon level. Breathe out all the way while squeezing in. Now hold these “vises” tightly while you inhale. As your “lower pear” expands, you are exercising your diaphragm muscle. Your fingers and thumbs will be slowly forced open. Do this six to ten times, with a 4-count inhale and

a 6-to-8-count exhale. Take a regular breath in between each squeeze to give yourself a rest, to feel the flush of blood to this area, and to note any other changes.

Any dizziness suggests a low tolerance for energy. If dizzy, wait 30–60 seconds before doing more in order to give your body a chance to absorb the excess energy. When practiced regularly over time, this exercise can improve your diaphragmatic action and increase your lung volume. More advanced breathing techniques are available at Breathing.com.

The Pear / Cone Breathing Ratio

No breathing pattern is static, but experience has shown that a good pattern should have a strong tendency toward this 70/30 ratio, due to the sufficient support needed by one’s internal core—also known as the *dan tien*, the *hara*, or the internal foundation—which includes the diaphragm. This ratio promotes “rest, digest & heal.”

The 70/30 ratio may change dramatically—even to its opposite of 30/70—when the system encounters extreme degrees of stress or distress, “fight or flight.” By consciously directing your breath, you can gently and consciously bring your breathing back to the 70/30 balance to better manage and recover from distress.

In the #176 *Breathing Development Fundamentals* program [Breathing.com], this area is called “the bottom of the pear.” We also liken it to the “basement” of an office building, with the “building” being the lungs, and the “elevator” being the diaphragm and wave-like movement that rises and descends with the breath.

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