

# UPGRADE YOUR BREATHING

*Nasal breathing is your new superpower*



BY ANDREW CATALDO CSCS, OPEX CCP

Do you ever pay attention to how you breathe? How do you breathe when you are sitting at your desk? How about while you are exercising? Do you know how you breathe when you sleep?

Breathing along with our heartbeat is a foundational process for our function. For most we are unconscious breathers, meaning that we are unaware if we are breathing through our nose or mouth or if we are taking rapid shallow breaths or long and slow ones.

### **Mouth Breathing**

In a previous ebook ([Breathing and Mindfulness](#)) I wrote about the benefits of breathing as it relates to mental health and well-being. This week I want to focus on HOW we breathe. Humans like most mammals are meant to breathe through their nasal passages in a slow, calm, and controlled manner. However, much like our deviation from proper sleep, nutrition, and movement, we have largely become mouth breathers. Breathing predominantly through the mouth has led to many issues in human health:

1. Development of sleep apnea
2. Changes in facial structure
3. Associated with mental health disorders (anxiety and depression)
4. Chronic energy depletion and poor sleep
5. Increased respiratory rate

James Nestor's book titled [Breath](#) takes a deep dive into all of the above points and more.

The biggest issues we see with chronic mouth breathers are the changes in facial structure and sleep disturbances. Leaving our mouths open to breathe (along with nutritional deficiencies) has made our mouth, nasal passage, and jaws smaller. This has made it harder for us to get air into our lungs, our teeth have become crowded making it harder to eat and chew food, and our airways are becoming blocked by our tongues.

One of the main reasons we need orthodontics is because of our nutrient-poor diet and spending all of our time mouth breathing.

In the case of normal nasal breathing, our passageway can humidify the air coming in, release nitric oxide and filter the dirt and bacteria in the air.

If you ever wake up in the morning and find your throat being really dry it is because you were mouth breathing while sleeping.

Nitric oxide is a vasodilator which means that it plays a role in improving our lung's ability to exchange carbon dioxide and oxygen better. This is critical to our ability to tolerate carbon dioxide. Without getting too complicated carbon dioxide tolerance is an important indicator for anxiety attacks.

As for the filtration of our air...would you rather let the natural mucosa take care of the dirt and bacteria or let it go right into your lungs?

## **Habits for Better Breathing**

The first step to changing your breathing habits is awareness. In the beginning, I would stop often after realizing I had spent an extended period only breathing through my mouth. Over time it has become a habit and I rarely catch myself breathing out of my mouth. However, during very intense bouts of exercise, I will revert to mouth breathing. These bouts are rare and for most, you should be working to a capacity where you can maintain nasal breathing.

The more challenging time is while we are sleeping, I mean, after all, we aren't even conscious. For years I have practiced mouth taping while sleeping. Yes, taping your mouth closed while sleeping. Don't worry if you feel anxious just reading that I was right there with you. All you need is a thin strip of tape ( I use 3M medical tape as it stays put and doesn't irritate your skin) that overlaps the center of your upper and lower lip. This will still allow you to breathe and talk out if needed. It is used more as a cue for you to keep your mouth closed. More than likely the first week or so of this practice you will take the tape off unconsciously in the middle of the night, however, as with the daytime nasal breathing it will get better over time.

Making a small shift in the way you breathe will no doubt improve your sleep, energy, and cognitive function all while helping you stay calm and focused.

## **Take-Home Messages**

Nasal Breathe at all times other than eating, drinking, speaking, and very intense bouts of exercise.

Be AWARE of if you are breathing through your nose or mouth

Practice intentional nasal breathing for 5-10 mins per day

Practice mouth taping while sleeping.

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