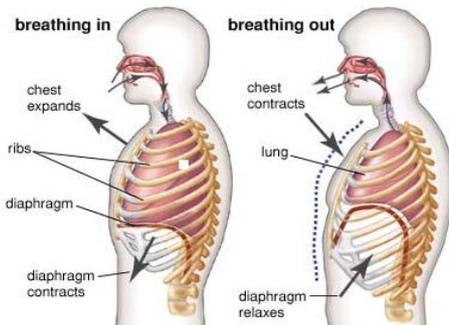


Pilates Breathing

The Pilates Inhale

Breathing in through the nose warms the air and filters it through the cilia (small hairs in the nostrils). The breath then moves through a series of branches (bronchioles) that looks somewhat like an upside down tree. The diaphragm is at the base of the rib cage at the thoracic area. As we breathe, the diaphragm contracts and relaxes. The Pilates breath tries to get the diaphragm to move across the ribs, going downward during the inhale, allowing space for the air to fill the lungs. It looks like a sling or a hammock attached to the ribs.



The Pilates Exhale

Stitching the ribs together in Pilates breathing causes the diaphragm to move, like an arch, up. This forces the air out and contracts the abdominals connected to the ribs. The inhale also gives you a great stretch of the muscles in-between the ribs (intercostals).

Full Breathing

As your breathing improves, you will feel the muscles between the ribs stretch on the inhale and the abdominals contract on the exhale. Over time, you will also feel your abdominal muscles working when you inhale, by keeping the abdominals connected as the breath goes out into the lungs and rib cage.

Breathing during Exercise

Often, in exercise, we should breathe out on exertion or effort. You may have heard people say “exhale with exertion.” In Pilates, the breath can be a little different. Many forms of Pilates have the breath coordinated with the movement of the spine. For example, “during exhalation the rib cages closes in and down while the spine flexes slightly. For this reason, an exhale is suggested to encourage spinal flexion. During inhalation, the rib cage opens out and up while the spine extends. An inhale is suggested to encourage spinal extension...”

The most important thing is to remember to breathe. If you get confused don't hold your breath keep breathing. Always begin the breath before the movement.