

# Surya Bhedana Pranayama

Also known as ‘right nostril breathing’. Besides recognising the physical tissues in our body, such as our muscles and bones, yogic anatomy also recognises the presence of energetic channels, known as ‘Nadis’. There are three main channels: left, right and centre, known as the Ida Nadi, Pingala Nadi, and Sushumna Nadi respectively.

Surya translates to ‘sun’ and is represented by the ‘Ha’ syllable in Hatha. Bhedana means ‘piercing’ or ‘penetrating’. The practice is mentioned in the yoga texts Hatha Yoga Pradeepika and the Gheranda Samhita. It is considered a form of Kumbhaka practice, which means that it incorporates breath retention. As it is an advanced practice, the breath should only be held as long as the practitioner feels comfortable. In its simplest form, this Pranayama practice is done by inhaling through the right nostril, holding the breath, and exhaling through the left nostril.

The right nostril connects to Pingala Nadi –an energetic channel in the body that begins in Muladhara chakra, and ends in the right nostril. Pingala is Sanskrit for ‘tawny’ or ‘orange’. It represents the masculine sun energy, governs our essential life processes, and imparts vitality, strength and efficiency. As such, it is associated with extraversion, masculine energy, the left (logical/linear) side of the brain and right right side of the body. The Pingali Nadi needs to be balanced with Ida Nadi, which is the feminine, creative and more introverted side. Otherwise a person with a blocked Pingali Nadi but free-flowing Ida Nadi may be very nurturing, but lack the vigour to reach their potential in earthly or spiritual development.

By practicing Surya Bhedana Pranayama we activate the Pingala Nadi, which will also improve our ability to carry out physical work. The practice is said to give vigour and fill the body up with sun energy, which can be used to balance excess coolness in the system, especially during colder Kapha or Vata seasons.

Surya Bhedana is a parallel technique to Chandra Bhedana, which is done by inhaling through the left nostril, and can be found [here](#).

## How to practice Surya Bhedana Pranayama

1. Sit comfortably on the mat in any cross legged position.
2. Bring the right hand in Vishnu Mudra (index finger and middle finger bent towards the palm), and use the ring finger to close the left nostril.
3. Inhale deeply through the right nostril and fill the lungs completely.
4. Engage the Jalandhara Bandha (chin lock) and Mula Bandha (root lock).
5. Retain the breath for as long as feels comfortable. In yogic texts, it is said that one should hold the breath until perspiration appears. However, listen carefully to your body, and never overdo it.
6. Release the Jalandhara Bandha (chin lock) and Mula Bandha (root lock), and exhale through the left nostril (Ida Nadi), keeping the right nostril closed.
7. Continue in this manner for 5-10 rounds, or 1-3 minutes. Advanced practitioners can continue up to 80 rounds per sitting.

## Tips & Cautions

- Those suffering from heart ailments and blood pressure problems should not attempt practices involving breath retention, without consulting a doctor.
- Seek advice from a medical professional if you have had brain or heart surgery before attempting this practice.
- Pranayama should not be done right after a meal. Ensure a gap of around 4 hours after eating so the stomach is empty.
- When you begin this practice, you can try it without the Kumbhaka (breath retention). This will make for a more relaxing practice.

## 8 benefits of Surya Bhedana Pranayama

1. Increases heat in the body.
2. Increases our digestive fire.
3. Clears the frontal sinuses.
4. Relieves feelings of depression.
5. Removes blockages in the Nadis, which will contribute to our spiritual awakening.
6. Relieves all diseases caused by lack of oxygen in the body
7. The Gheranda Samhita mentions that Surya Bhedana pranayama prevents decay and death.
8. In the Hatha Yoga Pradeepika, it is also mentioned that one can engage the Uddhiyana Bandha (abdominal lock) at the end of Kumbhaka (breath retention), which forces the prana to enter the central pranic channel called Sushumna Nadi. This leads to awakening of the Kundalini Shakti.