

# Regaining the Power of Breath



## THE BREATH POWER - BUTEYKO METHOD OF BREATHING RECONDITIONING

A natural, safe & effective way of improving the quality of your life

How much should we breathe? Most people in our society would probably say "the more, the better". It seems that we are encouraged to deep breathe in an effort to get better oxygen levels in the body. However, any examination of the physiology of respiration indicates that this concept is quite misleading - even dangerous.



A Russian medical doctor and scientist, Dr Konstantin Pavlovich Buteyko, made some clinical observations and discoveries which revealed that human breathing habits seem to have strayed from what our physiology books describe as normal. What he identified as increasingly prevalent in Western society, is

low level and mostly hidden hyperventilation, which he discovered is a major underlying cause of human illness. He further noticed that by reducing this overbreathing to more normal respiratory volume levels, that a whole range of diseases and their symptoms improved. He then developed a program for enabling patients to retrain their breathing pattern which has evolved into the Buteyko Technique.

Normal respiratory tidal volume for a healthy adult at rest is internationally recognised as 4-6 litres per minute. The most important effect of hyperventilation is hypocapnia, and it is this lowering of Carbon Dioxide levels, and the resulting imbalances caused throughout the organism, that Buteyko identified as a major problem to our health.

As a response to stress (eg. illness, fright, allergy, emotion, pain etc - some of which could be hereditary) the heart rate increases, breathing deepens and hormone production changes. It is worth noting that during most of the period of evolution of the human body, stress occurred simultaneously with physical activity for which these responses were quite appropriate.

Nowadays, most of our stress occurs while our bodies are at rest - in which case the above responses become quite inappropriate. In prolonged periods of stress, deeper breathing becomes an unrecognised, unconscious and continuous habit and physiological pattern. Once the body becomes conditioned to the lower levels of CO<sub>2</sub>, the respiratory mechanism drives us to breathe more than we need to, thus keeping the levels low. Both oxygen and carbon dioxide are needed in certain proportions to ensure normal physiological functioning. With low levels of carbon dioxide, the body's smooth muscle tissue can go into spasm or constriction, creating problems in the sinus passages, lungs, arteries, heart, digestive system and so on (Brown, 1953; Demeter & Cordasco, 1986). CO<sub>2</sub> is well known in its role of facilitation of oxygen splitting from the haemoglobin, as well as in pH balance in the blood and respiratory system.

Buteyko also describes its role in maintaining healthy vessel tone and reducing excess mucus production. According to Buteyko, when hyperventilation is triggered to increase, the lungs of an asthma sufferer react with constriction of airways, excess mucus production and swelling, i.e. the symptoms of asthma. In fact Buteyko has written an extensive biochemical theory highlighting the role of CO<sub>2</sub> as a regulator in the immune, cardiovascular, hormonal, digestive and neuro systems.

( Part of this is accessible through the website for Buteyko Training Services-[http:// www.buteyko.com.au](http://www.buteyko.com.au) ) *cont....*



*drug-free solutions & lifestyle strategies*

### Aaron Lumsdaine's Breath Power - Buteyko Training Services

Postal Address PO Box 400 SOUTH PERTH 6951 WESTERN AUSTRALIA  
Freecall (Australia Only) 1800 638 444 Telephone: 61 8 (08) 9316 0193  
Facsimile: 61 8 (08) 9316 0193 Mobile: 0404 217753 International: 61 404 217753  
Web Site: [www.buteyko.com.au](http://www.buteyko.com.au) e-mail: [bts@buteyko.com.au](mailto:bts@buteyko.com.au) ABN: 27 002 006 915

*"A method whose time has come - A self generating way of optimising oxygenation to every cell and taking the body from a state of defence & merely existing to truly living by perfecting what you do most - Breathing!"*

# Regaining the Power of Breath ...cont

In the Breath Power - Buteyko program, clients learn to recognise their own overbreathing pattern and how to retrain their breathing to normal levels. A range of adverse symptoms are reversed, and relief from asthma and many other conditions follows.

The following benefits are typically observed:

- **Recovery of nasal breathing (applicable to all activities). This allows for effective filtration, humidification, temperature and airflow regulation and reduces allergen entry.**
- **For asthmatics, relief of acute bronchospasm through the bronchodilatory properties of CO<sub>2</sub>, leading rapidly to a reduction in the need for bronchodilators; then reconditioning of the automatic breathing pattern and avoidance of bronchospasm with continued practise and application of Buteyko's methods.**
- **Improvement in oxygenation of cells through correction of oxygen/carbon dioxide balance.**
- **Reduction of excess mucus.**
- **Improvements in a range of other conditions such as allergies, rhinitis, sinusitis, stress, anxiety disorders, obesity, circulation, apnea, snoring, skin disorders, CFS, hypoglycemia and emphysema.**
- **Improvement in quality of sleep - less wakes, movement, noise and disturbing dreams as well as a new clarity on waking.**
- **Increased energy levels and enhanced sports performance.**
- **Correction of digestive malfunction (eg. acid reflux, constipation, flatulence).**

The teaching of the technique is varied according to the individual's age, history, condition and response. Some lifestyle modifications involving posture, nutrition, sleep and exercise are recommended to enhance the benefits of the breathing exercises.

The causes of hyperventilation are addressed. Adults are taught in a different manner from children, and parents are instructed in ways to assist infants to develop good breathing habits. The method is usually taught in small group workshops - at least five sessions each of about one and a half to two hours duration. All participants are invited to have any follow-up phone consultations or workshop sessions as required. Most of the work is done in the first five sessions, usually resulting in significant improvement in most conditions, and sufficient understanding of the technique so that few patients require much follow-up. Patients are usually supplied with notes and support materials during the workshops including diaries for daily recording of exercise results, pulse variations, symptoms, medication intake, reports of sleep length and quality and energy levels etc. Needless to say, changing unconscious breathing patterns requires discipline, perseverance and persistence, so the structure and feedback provided by a qualified Breath Power - Buteyko practitioner is the essential beginning.

The first Australian medical research trial of the Buteyko Method for asthma commenced in December 1994 at the Mater Hospital in Brisbane - in conjunction with the Australian Association of Asthma Foundations.

All 39 of the moderately severe asthmatics in the trial were found to be breathing 3-4 times the normal resting minute volume. The 19 who learned the Buteyko Technique were all able to reduce their relief medication by an average of 90% while having a decrease in their asthma symptoms (within two weeks), and at the end of three months they had reduced their preventative medication by 50%. This improvement corresponded with a significant reduction in their 'minute volume' ventilation, confirming Buteyko's theory. The 'control group' (the other 20 participants who continued their normal medication regime and did some physiotherapy/relaxation breathing) showed no improvement.

Aaron Lumsdaine, Senior Buteyko Practitioner trained by Alexander Stalmatski, a leading protege of Dr. Buteyko's, was the first to introduce the method into Western Australia in 1994. He has taught over 4000 people throughout Australia and conducted programs in the USA, Canada and Indonesia and is based in Perth, Western Australia.

For more information about the method, it is recommended to visit the website mentioned earlier. There are also three books available - 'Every Breath You Take' by Sydney GP and Naturopath, Dr Paul Ameisen (Lansdowne Press - Australia); 'Freedom from Asthma' by Alexander Stalmatski (Hale Clinic Health Library - London); and 'Breathing Free' by Teresa Hale (Hodder & Stoughton - London)

Written by **Jac Vidgen** for **Buteyko Training Services**



drug-free solutions & lifestyle strategies

**Aaron Lumsdaine's Breath Power - Buteyko Training Services**

Postal Address PO Box 400 SOUTH PERTH 6951 WESTERN AUSTRALIA  
FreeCall (Australia Only) 1800 638 444 Telephone: 61 8 (08) 9316 0193  
Facsimile: 61 8 (08) 9316 0193 Mobile: 0404 217753 International: 61 404 217753  
Web Site: [www.buteyko.com.au](http://www.buteyko.com.au) e-mail: [bts@buteyko.com.au](mailto:bts@buteyko.com.au) ABN: 27 002 006 915

*"A method whose time has come - A self generating way of optimising oxygenation to every cell and taking the body from a state of defence & merely existing to truly living by perfecting what you do most - Breathing!"*