



## A guide to practice relaxation

At Alameda Alliance for Health (Alliance), we are here to help you take charge of your health. You can use this guide to teach yourself how to relax.

Below are three (3) relaxation methods. They are simple and they work. Try to do them once or twice a day. Pick a time and place where you can be alone. With practice you can use these skills, anywhere, anytime to help you cope with life's ups and downs.

### 1 ROLL BREATHING

Full deep breathing is a way to release tension. You may sit, stand or lie down to practice this breathing.

1. Place one hand on your belly and the other on your chest. Notice how your hands move as you breathe in and out.
2. Fill your lower lungs by breathing so that the hand on your lower belly goes up when you inhale and the hand on your chest remains still. Do this 8 to 10 times.
3. Inhale into your upper chest. As you do this, your hand on the chest will rise and the hand on your belly will fall.
4. Now switch off between the two. Inhale into your lower lungs and exhale. Then inhale into your upper chest and exhale. Practice this breathing for 3 to 5 minutes.



**Caution:** Some people get dizzy the first few times they try Roll Breathing. If this happens slow down your breathing or take a break. Get up slowly.

*Adapted from Healthwise Handbook: A Self Care Guide for You, Donald K. Kemper.*

## 2 MUSCLE RELAXATION

Lie down on your back and stretch out on a mat. Tense each of the following muscle groups hard, but not to the point of cramping, for 4 to 10 seconds. Then give yourself 10 to 20 seconds to release it and relax. After you have tensed a group, try to keep it relaxed while you are tensing other groups.

Body Part	Create Tension
Hands	Clench them.
Wrists and forearms	Extend them and bend the hands back at the wrist.
Biceps and upper arms	Clench your hands into fists, bend your arms at the elbows and flex your biceps.
Shoulders	Shrug them (bring your shoulders up toward your ears and let them down).
Forehead	Wrinkle it into a deep frown.
Around the eyes	Close your eyes as tightly as possible (if you wear contacts, remove them first).
Cheeks and jaws	Grin from ear to ear.
Around the mouth	Press your lips together tightly.
Back of the neck	Press the back of your head against the floor.
Front of the neck	Touch your chin to your chest.
Chest	Take a deep breath and hold it, then exhale.
Back	Arch your back up and away from the floor.
Stomach	Suck it into a tight knot.
Hips and buttocks	Squeeze your buttocks together tightly.
Thighs	Clench them.
Lower legs	Point your toes toward your face. Then point your toes away and curl them downward at the same time.





### 3 RELAXATION RESPONSE

1. Lie in a place where you can stretch out comfortably. Close your eyes.
2. Begin to relax each set of muscles starting with your feet and moving to the top of your head.
3. Notice your breathing. Breathe from your belly. As you exhale, say a calming word to yourself. Repeat this word each time you exhale. Continue this for 10 to 20 minutes. As distracting thoughts and images enter your mind, don't dwell on them. Allow them to drift away.
4. Lie quietly for several minutes. Then open your eyes.

#### Do you need more support?

Please call Alliance Health Programs

Monday – Friday, 8 am – 5 pm

Phone Number: **1.510.747.4577**

Toll-Free: **1.855.891.9169**

People with hearing and speaking impairments

(CRS/TTY): **711/1.800.735.2929**

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