

# How's your breathing?

Learn Buteyko's Control Pause method and measure your own breathing pattern, suggests Kostas Wheelbarrow

**O**bjective accurate measurements are critical for any intelligent diagnosis. Otherwise one is left with vague generalities. Therefore, measuring the ventilation and its correlation to related disease pathology is essential.

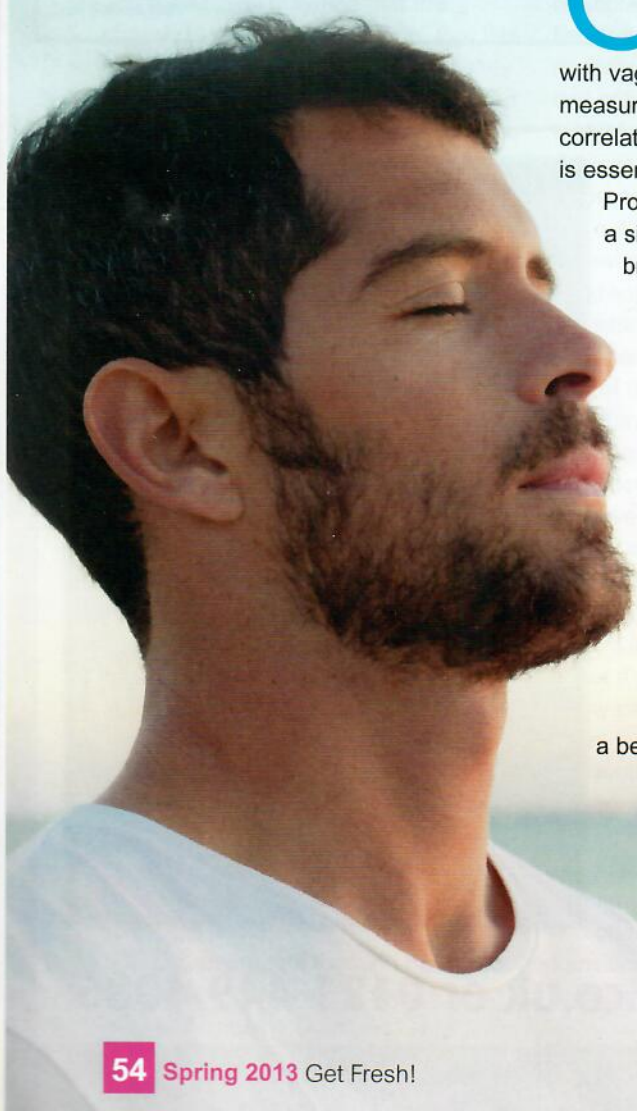
Professor Buteyko developed a simple way to measure the breathing that can be done by anyone, anywhere and at anytime. To accurately measure lung ventilation with conventional equipment is a laborious and extremely complex task. Any form of resistance, like a breathing tube, will distort the measurement and have an influence over the breathing, which is meant to be measured without interference.

Professor Buteyko developed a better and easier system, that is

a more indicative and precise measure of overall health, than any other test known to medical science. He developed the Control Pause method, and it only takes a few minutes, and the only equipment you need is a watch with a second hand. The idea is based on the fact that our breathing is driven by the respiratory centre, located in the medulla oblongata, part of the brain which provides the involuntary stimulus to breathe, due to its sensitivity to carbon dioxide.

Measuring the time it takes for it to respond to the accumulation of carbon dioxide, due to a breath hold, will tell us the amount a person ventilates on average per minute.

Very simply, the Control Pause is a breath holding manoeuvre, wherein we deliberately stop breathing and time the number of seconds that pass, until we feel the first urge to breathe again. The Control Pause is a precise diagnostic manoeuvre, and certain rules need to be adhered to to obtain a correct result:



1. A Control Pause should not be done immediately after a meal.
2. The person should be sitting upright and comfortably.
3. The breath holding should be preceded by a normal inhalation and exhalation. It should not be a deep breath or a shallow breath, but a normal breath in and out.
4. After the breath out, the breath should be held with the mouth closed and the nose pinched closed with the fingers.
5. During the breath hold, pay attention to the time keeping so that when the involuntary urge to breathe occurs, you will know exactly how many seconds have transpired.
6. As soon as the urge to breathe occurs, the nose should be released and the breathing resumed. The number of seconds that transpired during your breath hold is your Control Pause.

A common mistake is to breathe in after the Control Pause in an exaggerated way. It means the Control Pause was not done properly, because the breath was held beyond the first urge to breathe.

### Diagnosis of Control Pause

Before looking at the results, the following should be emphasised: a Control Pause is an extremely accurate diagnostic tool, but it can take a little time and practice to obtain precise readings. The most common mistakes in performing a Control Pause are:

1. A deeper than normal inhalation or exhalation, giving a higher reading.
2. Holding beyond the point of first difficulty, which will be indicated by a greater than normal urge to breathe, upon the breathing being resumed.

The Control Pause isn't accurate for young children and people who have lost respiratory sensitivity, such as with emphysema and so on.

Now we can look at interpreting the results and understand what our Control Pause score means. The correlation between the number of seconds and the average number of litres ventilated per minute is:

### 60 seconds

This score indicates an average ventilation of 3-4 litres of air per minute – optimal breathing.

A person who scores 60 seconds will be in superb physical and mental shape; there will be not a hint of disease. Their body will be lean and they will enjoy physical exercise – their demeanour will be naturally refined. People with a Control Pause of 60 seconds are very rare.

### 40 seconds

This score indicates an average ventilation of about 5-6 litres per minute. The person who scores 40 seconds will be relatively healthy; no signs of disease. Quite rare.

### 30 seconds

This score indicates an average ventilation of 6-8 litres per minute – twice the optimal ventilation. The person who scores 30 seconds will be in fair health; no serious chronic diseases, but they may have some minor health issues, such as mild allergies. With age they will sustain degenerative diseases more quickly than those above.

### 20 seconds

This score indicates an average ventilation of 9-12 litres per minute – thrice the optimal ventilation. This is the estimated average for the contemporary Western person. All the common conditions can be seen in people who score about 20 seconds. The pathology will vary according to the genetic predisposition of the individual, but one

way or the other, the consequences of breathing three times above what the organism requires will exact a hefty toll. Asthma, allergies, bronchitis, cancer, emphysema, high or low blood pressure, insomnia, the onset of diabetes, obesity, confused mentality – the list goes on and on. A Control Pause of 20 seconds is indicative of either an ongoing or approaching health catastrophe.

### 10 seconds

A Control Pause of about 10 seconds is indicative of very poor and fragile health – it implies an average ventilation rate of six times above the recommended norm. People with a Control Pause of about 10 seconds will either be suffering very serious health problems or run a very high risk of trauma.

### 5 seconds and below

A Control Pause of five seconds or below is indicative of an imminent collapse of the organism. The length of time would vary upon how long the Control Pause has been so low and other factors.

Note that some people with a low Control Pause may have no specific health complaints, but are prone to a surprise trauma such as heart attack.

## Find out more

- Learn the Classical Buteyko Breathing Method with Learn Buteyko from the Total Health website at [www.totalhealthnow.co.uk](http://www.totalhealthnow.co.uk)
- Read about Professor Konstantin Buteyko at [www.buteyko.co.uk](http://www.buteyko.co.uk)
- Read Jane E Brody's New York Times article, 'A breathing technique offers help for people with asthma' ([www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com))