

This month at ...

COTTINGHAM
DENTAL PRACTICE



What are the advantages of nose breathing v mouth breathing?

Take air in, let it out, repeat 25,000 times a day. One of the short-listed books for the Royal Society Book Prize 2021 was *Breath* by journalist James Nestor. He took part in a discussion on BBC Radio 4's *Start the Week* on 27 December 2021 (www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m0012scb), arguing that humans have lost the ability to breath correctly. One of the consequences can be a reduction in the health of your mouth, as your saliva dries more quickly, removing protection from bacteria.

It's estimated that about 30-50% of adults breathe through their mouth, especially earlier in the day. This could potentially lead to health issues like bad breath and dry mouth.

How does nose breathing differ from mouth breathing?

Nose breathing: your nose is designed to help you breathe safely, efficiently and properly. It can do this due to its ability to:

- Filter out foreign particles. Nasal hairs filters out dust, allergens, and pollen, which helps prevent them from entering your lungs.
- Humidify inhaled air. Your nose warms and moisturises the air you breathe in. This brings the air you inhale to body temperature, making it easier for your lungs to use.
- Produce nitric oxide. During nasal breathing, your nose releases nitric oxide (NO). NO is a vasodilator, which means it helps to widen blood vessels. This can help improve oxygen circulation in your body.

Mouth breathing: your mouth helps you eat, drink and talk. You can also use your mouth to breathe, but it doesn't have many of the unique

features that your nose has for this purpose. The downside of mouth breathing is your mouth loses moisture, which can cause dry mouth. It could also increase your risk of inhaling unfiltered air, allergic reactions to allergens, asthma, bad breath, tooth decay, gum inflammation (gingivitis), snoring, sleep apnoea, and teeth or jaw abnormalities.

What are the benefits of nose breathing?

Since your nose was specifically designed to help you breathe, nasal breathing has many advantages. It is beneficial primarily because it allows your nasal cavities to:

- reduce exposure to foreign substances
- humidify and warm inhaled air
- increase air flow to arteries, veins and nerves
- increase oxygen uptake and circulation
- slow down breathing
- improve lung volume
- help your diaphragm work properly
- lower your risk of allergies and hay fever
- reduce your risk of coughing
- aid your immune system
- lower your risk of snoring and sleep apnoea
- support the correct formation of teeth and mouth.

If you realise that you do tend to mouth breath more than using your nose, please mention it to Rob or Maria when you next have an appointment. This observation may help them to manage your oral health more effectively.

HAPPY
New Year
January 2022

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