Breathing Tips for Running

Posture - Stand Tall During Your Run

Good posture keeps the chest cavity open. Poor posture such as caving in shoulders tightens the chest muscles and makes breathing more challenging during a run. Relax your upper body and shoulders and stand straight during a run.

Breathe with your belly, not with your chest

Your belly should move in and out with every breath. If it is not moving when you breathe, you are probably not taking deep enough breaths. Chest breathing is a weak form of breathing. It's too shallow to bring in maximal oxygen and doesn't fully expel your lungs when you exhale.

As you breathe, your stomach should expand and contract as your diaphragm forces air into and out of your lungs. Your chest, meanwhile, should remain mostly still, but you'll take in more oxygen with every breath. A good exhale will clear the lungs of CO2 making room for more oxygen.

- **Training your breathing muscles**
  The easiest way to start is by lying on the ground. While lying on your back, breathe deeply so your belly rises with your chest as you inhale, and lowers while you exhale. Continue to practice this while lying down until you feel confident to move upright.

Take longer breaths through your mouth and nose

This will help ensure that you are getting enough oxygen to your body, and is the best way to prevent muscle and lung fatigue. It also helps increase endurance by getting proper oxygen circulation to your muscles.

Find a breathing pattern

Breathing rhythms refer to the number of foot steps you take with each foot while breathing in or out. Your exact breathing rhythm will depend on how hard or easy you are running and/or the intended intensity of your workout.

Easy runs: Typically, you'll find that a 3:3 rhythm may work well (three steps – one with your left, one with your right, one with your left – while breathing in)

Moderate paced runs: Runs harder than an easy run, but not all out race efforts, should typically be performed at a 2:2 ratio

Experiment with different breathing patterns to find the right one for you. It will depend on how fast you are running

Side Stitches

If you encounter a side stitch while running, you can slow your breathing rhythm to take deeper, controlled breaths at a 3:3 rhythm. Often, side stitches are caused by undue stress to the diaphragm, which is escalated by shallow breathing. Other factors that may lead to side stitches are running on a full stomach or becoming dehydrated on your run. Dehydration contributes to muscle fatigue and spasms, so go into your runs well hydrated. Drink plenty of fluids before, during, and after your runs.