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| *MILE Prehabilitation* |
| *Worksheet 7c: Diaphragmatic breathing* |

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There are two ways of breathing - from the diaphragm or the chest. We tend to breathe from the chest when exercising or when we feel stressed. When we breathe from the diaphragm this helps us to slow the breathing down and feel calmer. This is the best type of breathing for relaxation.

Firstly, you’ll need to get yourself into a comfortable position, preferably seated with both feet on the floor (but lying down is OK). If it is comfortable to do so you may wish to close your eyes or lower your gaze.

Your diaphragm is located at the bottom of your ribcage, by your belly. In order to make sure you’re breathing from the diaphragm, place one hand on your upper chest and the other on your stomach, just below your rib cage. As you breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth, notice which hand rises first. Do you notice the hand on your chest, or your stomach rising first?

As you breathe in through your nose you should notice the hand on your stomach rising and this will indicate that you are breathing through your diaphragm.

As you exhale gently through your mouth, feel your stomach flatten. There should be little or no movement in the chest. Make your out breath longer than your in breath.

It can take some time to get used to breathing from the diaphragm –take a moment to continue to practice.

As we will now bring this exercise to a close, take three further breaths and gradually open your eyes and come back into the room.



Take a moment to notice how you feel in the body – can you notice a slowing down of your heart rate? Of your breathing? Or perhaps less tension in your muscles?

If you found this exercise useful, we would encourage you to practice it regularly. For example, you may wish to identify a particular time of day that you allocate a few minutes to practice diaphragmatic breathing.

For some people, breathing from the chest can be a habit and it can be hard to start breathing from the diaphragm. If you found this exercise difficult, don’t worry, you may prefer to try our Four-Corner Breathing exercise instead.

NB. If you have low blood pressure, slowing down your breathing can make you feel dizzy/ faint, so only do this exercise sitting down and in a safe space; you may want to ask a health care professional if it is ok for you to slow your breathing down in this way.