



3 Reasons you're Breathless while Swimming

and how to fix it



Free eBook

An aura is a sensation, a feeling, a subtle sensory stimulus. It's something we can experience when suspended in water, when moving through it, feeling it against our skin.

Welcome!

My name is Laura, and I'm excited you're here to learn more about swimming.

I created Aura Move as a way to empower people to become stronger, faster swimmers for life. Swimming is a highly technical sport and I enjoy helping people improve their form, whether that's confidence to finish their first lap or stand on top of the podium.

Regardless of age or experience, I firmly believe it is never too late to swim better.



 AuraMove

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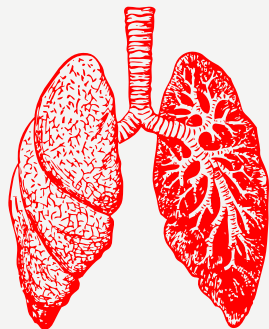
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Summary

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Breathlessness occurs when we can't sufficiently fuel our muscles with oxygen, or expel the carbon dioxide required to perform an activity.



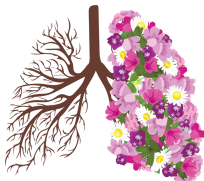


Basics of Breathing

How we breathe.

Normal breathing is a rhythmic, effortless process that utilizes the diaphragm, a dome-shaped muscle in the chest. The diaphragm contracts during inspiration and relaxes during expiration, facilitating increased airflow in and out of the body.

Anxiety or discomfort in the water often results in 'shallow breathing,' which primarily engages the accessory muscles located in the upper chest and neck (scalene, sternocleidomastoid, and trapezius). Poor breathing mechanics hinder relaxation, clear thinking, and optimal swimming performance.



Why do we breathe?

Breathing involves the movement of air into and out of the lungs to enable gas exchange inside our bodies. Without adequate oxygen intake, and carbon dioxide removal, the muscles fatigue quickly. When you learn to breathe well, the muscles receive adequate oxygen and help you swim faster and further.

Your swimming efficiency is majorly impacted by how you breathe. Breathing impacts buoyancy, mental state, and muscle fatigue. Even elite athletes work to improve their breathing, so whether you are a nervous beginner or wanting to excel, learning to optimise breathing for swimming is essential.

Exhale



Over-breathing presents one of the paradoxes of swimming. Holding your breath leads to a buildup of carbon dioxide, triggering a desire to inhale more. Rather than gasping for air, prioritize exhaling first. Mastering the skill of expelling air while your face is submerged is fundamental in swimming. Listen for the bubbles.

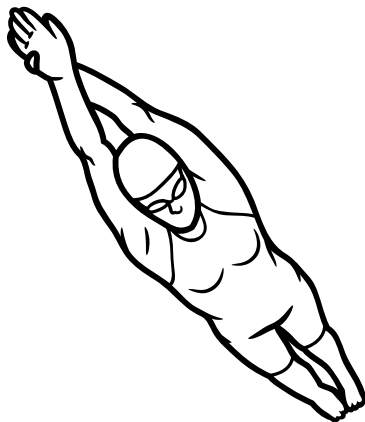


Breathing while Swimming

Why do I feel breathless while swimming?

While swimming, we experience unique environmental challenges that can make breathing harder. A horizontal body position, increased pressure from the water, and breath holds contribute to feelings of breathlessness. When submerged, the hydrostatic pressure from water places an external load on our chest and increases resistance when we breathe. When we have to work harder to breathe, our body requires more oxygen.

These factors alone can cause breathlessness, now imagine if we compound that with poor technique! When our muscles are working hard, our body requires more oxygen. For many new swimmers, over-kicking or a poor body position requires significantly more energy, leading to breathlessness.



Head Position

How you hold your head in the water will impact your body position.



Correct Position

The correct head position while swimming is to maintain a long neck, with the eyes to the floor or just ahead. While breathing, the head, neck, and spine are aligned.

Common mistake: The entire head lifts out of the water to breathe.

Why it's important

Our heads are heavy! When you look forward while stroking, or lift the entire face out to breathe, it can cause the legs to sink. When the legs sink it increases drag and makes swimming difficult.



How to improve

Keep your neck long and practice looking at the floor. The black lines are painted on the bottom of the pool to help you navigate without looking up!



Over-kicking

The big muscles in our legs require a lot of oxygen during movement. Constantly kicking requires more oxygen and can contribute to breathlessness.



Correct Technique

You should feel the propulsion of your kick on top of the foot. Effective kick is performed with a “flick” or “whip-like” action at the ankle. Keep the leg long, toes pointed, and aim to kick as little as you can. Feel your heels lightly bubble the surface.

Common mistake: Constantly kicking, or kicking with a large bend in the knee.

Why it's important

The muscles in our legs are the biggest in the body, therefore kicking requires a lot of energy and oxygen to function. Even if you only require kick to maintain streamline, it is important to have good technique. Good technique occurs when the core and glutes are lightly engaged, the leg stays long and the ankles are relaxed.



How to improve

Focus on engaging your core and glutes to help raise your heels near the surface. Flick your ankles, rather than flexing your knee.

Oxygenation

How often you breathe, how quickly you exhale, and the depth of your breath are important for swimming efficiency.



Timing

Breathe often. Aim to roll and breathe every 2, or 3 strokes to ensure your muscles get the oxygen they need to swim. Exhale while your face is in the water. Exhale can occur through the nose, the mouth, or both.

Common mistake: Holding the breath while the face is in the water. Exhaling and inhaling while rolled on the side.

Why it's important

Holding the breath causes carbon dioxide to build in the blood and this can lead to anxiety, tingling hands and lightheadedness. Optimal breathing requires a rhythmic, relaxed inhale and exhale in timing with the stroke.



How to improve

Practice exhaling out the nose as soon as your face returns to the water after the breath.





Improving your swimming will take time, persistence, and patience. Exhale, focus on the process, and stay curious about how you move through the water.

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