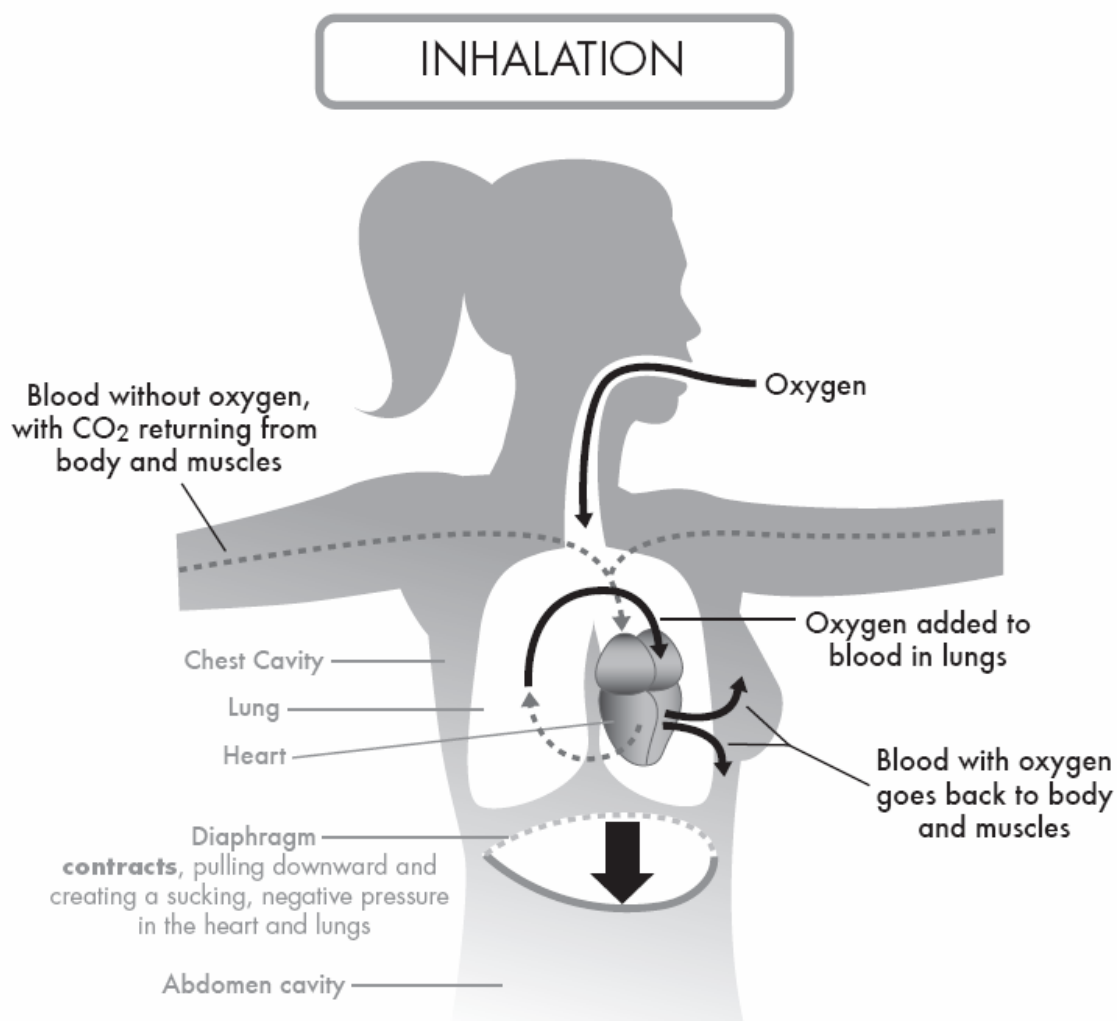


Breathing and Exercise

Proper breathing technique does a lot more than “feed” your muscles and improve your workouts. The more effective your breathing, the better your heart and your lungs will work together. The main muscle that helps you breathe is the diaphragm. It acts like the stopper in a syringe when it contracts. When it contracts (inhaling), it pulls downward to create a vacuum in the chest, which draws air (oxygen) into the lungs. When inhaling drops the pressure in the chest, it also draws blood back to the heart from the rest of your body.



Then the diaphragm relaxes (exhaling), creating a positive pressure in the chest and unwanted air (carbon dioxide) is expelled from the lungs. Exhaling increases the pressure in the chest, making it easier for blood to leave the heart and go to the muscles (and brain).

When you resistance train, make sure you exhale when you tighten and shorten (CC) the muscle group you are exercising and then inhale when releasing and elongating (EC) it to its original position. This connection with contraction dynamics and breathing is essential to maximize your efforts, efficiency, and results. See the BOK web site for diagrams to help you understand how proper breathing technique affects your workout and your muscles.

