Cautions

_Ujjayi pranayama_ (Conquering Breath) needs to be learned under the careful guidance of an instructor. Be sure to practice with props, as directed.

Never swallow your saliva during or between inhalation and exhalation. Swallow after a complete exhalation. Do not practice if you have severe headache or constipation.

Do not practice this pranayama if you are feeling tired, as exertion can be harmful for the lungs and the heart. Do not practice strenuous yoga asanas after pranayama. Before pranayama, practice a few reclining asanas to expand the abdominal cavity and the diaphragm.

Pranayama is not just cycles of inhalation and exhalation, nor is it merely deep breathing. The practice of pranayama goes beyond these to link our psychological and spiritual dimensions.

1. All stages of _pranayama_ begin with described exhalation and end with inhalation. Do not force.

2. First, breathe out whatever tidal air remains in the lungs. Be sure to take a normal inhalation at the end of each stage of _pranayama_.

3. In inhalation, the breath touches the inner surface of the bottom sinus passages. In exhalation, it touches the outer surface at the top.

4. All inhalations are made with the sibilant sound ‘ssss’ and all exhalations with aspirate ‘hhhh’.

5. All stages of this _pranayama_, except those with retention, may be done at any time.

6. If doing more than one stage, _Savasana_ should be done only at the end of practice.

7. Follow instructions carefully.

8. Faulty practice can strain the lungs and diaphragm.

9. Never practice just after a meal, or immediately after an energetic session of asanas.

10. Please consult instructor if you experience any problem.
Ujjayi Pranayama • Conquest of Energy

Stage I
1. Prop appropriately. Lie and breathe normally. Relax your throat.
2. Stretch the legs out slowly, one at a time. Relax every part of your body.
3. Imagine pushing the scalp skin toward the brow.
4. Focus on an imaginary point inside the chest to exclude all external disturbances.
5. Look inward and feel senses withdraw without tensing eyeballs.
6. Consciously observe and feel breath flow throughout.
7. When breathing in, make sure that both lungs fill evenly. Feel chest expand upwards and outwards.
8. Breathe out quietly, emptying both lungs evenly.
9. Continue this way for 10 cycles, keeping the eyes closed throughout, but not tightly.
10. This makes one attentive, invigorates the nerves, loosens any hardness in the lungs and prepares them for deep breathing.

Stage II
1. As in Stage I, 1 through 5.
2. During this stage, inhale normally, then exhale slowly, deeply and steady.
3. Keep inner ears alert and receptive.
4. First, exhale normally to empty without strain or pressing down on abdominal organs.
5. Inhale normally through the nose.
6. Exhale slowly, deeply and steadily until empty.
7. Synchronize movements of diaphragm and abdomen, keeping the flow of breath smooth and uniform. Keep the sternum lifted.
8. Practice for 15 cycles.
9. This soothes the nerves and calms the brain. Ideal for those who suffer from cardiac disorders and those with hypertension.

Stage III
1. As in Stage I, 1 through 5, then Stage II, 3 and 4.
2. Take a slow, deep, steady in-breath. Relax the diaphragm and stretch it sideways, without inflating the abdomen.
3. Feel the breath move up from the pelvis to the pit of the throat then spread to each side of the torso.
4. Listen attentively and maintain rhythm throughout.
5. Deep inhalation tends to move eyeballs up. Consciously, gaze into the lungs.
6. At the start of the exhalation immobilize the diaphragm, then breathe out slowly but not deeply (though slightly longer than normal).
7. Practice 15 to 20 cycles.
8. Good for low blood pressure, asthma and depression. Instills confidence.