

Sitkari "The Hissing Breath"

The word 'see' relates to the sound created by this breath and 'kari' means 'that which produces'. Puraka (inhalation) is done through the partially opened mouth, where the lips are apart but the teeth are together, so as we breathe through the gaps between the teeth this creates a hissing sound. The rechaka (exhalation) is done through the nose. Generally we can practice up to 24 rounds of sitkari.

Sitkari has a cooling effect upon the blood so should only be practiced in warm weather or after a heating breath such as bhasrika where we wish to bring balance. In the HYP it is said to balance hormones, especially those related to the reproductive system making the practitioner virile and magnetically attractive without being lustful!!

Precautions & Prohibitions

It is not to be performed when feeling cold internally or externally or there is a polluted atmosphere. Also this breath should be avoided if we are suffering from chronic constipation, which is indicative of increased vata, a cold inner energy.

Sitali "The Cooling Breath"

To perform sitali we need to be able to curl the edges of the tongue inwards so the edges meet but this ability is genetically determined meaning in a class of 20 students you will always expect one or two students to be unable to do this. Where students cannot curl the tongue we always offer sitkari, the previous pranayama instead. To perform the technique we inhale through the curled tube of the tongue and then placing the tip of the tongue against the roof of the mouth we exhale through the nostrils.

Sitali possesses the same benefits as sitkari being cooling and calming, although they each affect slightly different parts of the brain and the focal point for sitkari is upon the sound produced whereas for sitali it is upon the cooling sensations of the breath.

Precautions & Prohibitions

Again it is not to be performed when feeling cold internally or externally or there is a polluted atmosphere. Also this breath should be avoided if we are suffering from chronic constipation, which is indicative of increased vata, a cold inner energy.