Introduction:

During this Covid 19 crisis, you may wish to consider the following breathing exercises to improve your lung function.

Yoga has been practiced for more than a thousand years in India. It consists of exercise of different body parts. Breathing exercises are one of them. Yoga is considered to be a very good exercise for maintaining proper health and also has a profound effect on the lung function of an individual. It is claimed that yoga helps in prevention, control and rehabilitation of many respiratory diseases. Yoga breathing exercise increases compliance of lungs and thorax, airway resistance and strength of respiratory muscles.

In Sanskrit ‘Pran’ means ‘Breath’ and ‘Ayama’ means ‘control’ so it is called as Pranayama. Pranayama is the complete breathing exercise which is the part of yoga.

Wear loose clothes and sit straight.
Should be done on an empty stomach.
Method 1: Bhostrika pranayam: (Bellows breath)

1. **Breathe in deeply through your nostrils.** First, feel the diaphragm move down, allowing the lungs to expand and forcing the abdomen out; then feel your chest expand with your collar bones rising last.

2. **Breath out quickly through your nostrils.** Feel your collar bones dropping, chest deflating, and abdomen shrinking as the lungs collapse. This process of exhaling should be much faster than the process of inhaling - almost like a rapid deflation.

3. **Repeat the process.** When correctly done, your chest will expand when you breathe in and deflate when you breathe out. Continue doing this for five minutes.

4. **With practice, speed up your breathing.** Beginners should always start slowly to avoid hyperventilating, but over time, it will be possible to turn this into a rapid breathing technique.
Method 2: Kapalbhati pranayam: (Shining forehead breath)

1. **Inhale through your nostrils normally** until your lungs are full. Keep your inhalation slow but unforced. First, feel the diaphragm move down, allowing the lungs to expand and forcing the abdomen out; then feel your chest expand with your collar bones rising last.

2. **Exhale through both nostrils forcefully.** This places the emphasis of the breath on the exhale rather than the (natural) inhale. Assist your exhalation by pulling in your stomach muscles to expel air. Exhaling should take much less time than it took to inhale.

3. “**Forced**” exhalation means that the contraction of your stomach muscles helps push the air out of your body. It does not mean that the exhalation should be uncomfortable for you in any way.

3. Repeat breaths for 15 minutes. You may take a minute rest after every five minutes.
**Method 3: Anulom vilom pranayam: (Alternate nostril breath)**

1. Close your eyes. Focus your attention on your breathing.
2. Close the right nostril with the right thumb. Simply press the thumb against your nostril to block it.
3. Inhale slowly through the left nostril. Fill your lungs with air. First, feel the diaphragm move down, allowing the lungs to expand and forcing the abdomen out; then feel your chest expand with your collar bones rising last.
4. Remove your thumb from your right nostril. Keep your right hand by your nose and your lungs full of air.
5. Use your ring and middle finger to close your left nostril. Most people find it easier to continue using the same hand to block either nostril, but you’re welcome to switch hands depending on which nostril you’re blocking. You can also switch if your arm gets tired.
6. Exhale slowly and completely with the right nostril. Feel the collar bones dropping, chest deflating, and abdomen shrinking as the lungs collapse. When you’ve finished exhaling, keep your left nostril closed.
7. Inhale through the right nostril. Fill your lungs.
8. Close the right nostril and open the left.
9. Breathe out slowly through the left nostril. This process is one round of anulom vilom pranayam.
10. Continue for 15 minutes. You may take a minute’s rest after every five minutes of exercise.
Method 4: Bahya pranayam: (External breath)

1. Inhale deeply through your nose. First, feel the diaphragm move down, allowing the lungs to expand and forcing the abdomen out; then feel your chest expand with your collar bones rising last.

2. Exhale forcefully. Use your stomach and diaphragm to push the air from your body. “Forced” exhalation means that the contraction of your stomach muscles helps push the air out of your body. It does not mean that the exhalation should be uncomfortable for you in any way.

3. Touch your chin to your chest and suck in your stomach completely. The goal is to leave a hollow below your ribcage, making it look like the front muscle wall of your abdomen is pressed against the back. Hold this position -- and your breath -- for as long as is comfortable.

4. Lift your chin and breathe in slowly. Allow your lungs to completely fill with air.

5. Repeat three to five times.
Method 5: *Bhramari pranayam*: (Bumblebee breath)

1. **Close your eyes.** Focus on your breathing.

2. **Place your thumbs in your ears, your index fingers above your eyebrows, and remaining fingers along the sides of your nose.** Keep each finger near a nostril.

3. **Breath in deeply through the nose.** First, feel the diaphragm move down, allowing the lungs to expand and forcing the abdomen out; then feel your chest expand with your collar bones rising last.

4. **Use your fingers to partially close each nostril.** Keep your lungs filled.

5. **Breathe out through the nose while humming.** Note that the humming sound should originate in your throat, not as a result of your partially-blocked nostrils.

6. **Repeat three times.**
Method 6: *Udgeeth pranayam*: (Chanting breath)

1. **Breathe in deeply through the nose.** First, feel the diaphragm move down, allowing the lungs to expand and forcing the abdomen out; then feel your chest expand with your collar bones rising last.

2. **Exhale very slowly while saying Om.** Allow the syllable to draw out as slowly as you can. Make sure to keep the 'O' long and the 'M' short. ("0000000000Om."), continuing for a long time as much you can.

3. **Repeat three times.**