

Uddiyana Bandha

'Empty the lungs...The lungs are kept empty throughout the control.

Relax the abdominal wall, keeping the lungs emptied of air. Now expand the thoracic cage as though to make a thoracic inspiration – but actually only go through the motions of expanding the ribs, without taking in air. A slight lift of the thoracic cage is usually found helpful.

The diaphragm will now move up into the thoracic cavity and the stomach will travel inwards, as though being pulled by a wire attached to the base of the backbone. Hold the retraction for a few seconds and then release the abdominal wall smoothly. If you let it spring back with a jerk, the inrush of air will be explosive.

What happens is that emptying the lungs and expanding the thorax causes the abdomen to move back to fill the vacuum created. This should be effortless.'
(From *The Complete Book of Yoga* by James Hewitt p50)

See also Pete Blackaby, *Intelligent Yoga*, p 166 - 167

Benefits

'The diaphragm is encouraged to move, to become more mobile, and thus to perform better the up-and-down piston-like movement that operates deep and healthful breathing. The important solar plexus region is stimulated. Elasticity of the lungs is improved, and the heart is said to receive a gentle massage obtainable in no other way. The abdominal muscles and internal organs receive a kneading and squeezing superior to what could be got from the hand of an expert masseur. The viscera are lifted and squeezed against the spine. Repeated uplift prevents prolapse. Metabolism, circulation, and digestion are stimulated.' (Hewitt, *ibid* p 53)

Precautions

You would only teach the full uddiyana bandha to experienced students because the practitioner must first be able to:

1. feel that the belly responds to the action of breathing;
2. comfortably hold the breath out at the end of the exhalation;
3. widen and deepen the ribcage i.e. have developed enough flexibility in the intercostal muscles between the ribs to allow this.

'..no more than momentary pauses between inhalation and exhalation are safe for persons with lung, heart, eye or ear troubles, or for persons with high blood pressure...persons with low blood pressure may pause briefly after breathing in, but should make no deliberate pause after breathing out.' (Hewitt, *ibid* pp 79, 80)

Contraindications: pregnancy; endometriosis; inflammatory conditions of the gut such as ulcerative colitis and diverticulitis (itises generally) as these conditions can lead to thinning of the gut.