

Happy return to a
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Happy New Year, everyone! Today I want to return to a topic I briefly mentioned before. And that topic is how massage therapy can help people with asthma. I have had asthma since I was three years old - I mentioned the full story in my 'Can Natural Asthma Remedies help treat Asthma?' post. And since trying to improve my asthma, I have massages with the intention to help relieve my symptoms. This involves massages being focused on my diaphragm, ribcage, upper chest, abdominal area, and back. And after these massages, my asthma always feels better. So, if you're looking for a natural asthma treatment for yourself or a loved one, then this blog post is for you.

What is Asthma? I'll keep this part brief because I have already mentioned this in my previous blog post. Asthma is a long-term respiratory condition that is estimated to affect about five million people in the UK alone (wow, a lot, right?). People with asthma have sensitive airways that become inflamed and tightened when they inhale something that irritates their airway. e.g. pollen. When you have asthma you are likely to experience some of the following symptoms:

- Wheezing (like a whistle sound)
- Breathlessness
- Chest tightening
- Coughing

There are many ways asthma is currently treated:

- Avoiding asthma triggers e.g. pollen, dust, cigarette smoke etc.
- Inhalers - reliever (blue), preventer (brown or orange), and combined preventer and long-acting reliever (purple, maroon or red)
- Tablets - steroid tablets, theophyllines or Leukotriene receptor antagonists

For many of you, you would like a natural asthma treatment to help reduce your asthma symptoms, and that's where massage therapy can help. Note: Please don't stop taking your currently

prescribed medications if you decide to try a massage. The Mechanics of Breathing Before we look at how massage can be an effective asthma treatment, we must first look at the mechanics of breathing. Your diaphragm and intercostal muscles work together to enable you to breathe.

The diaphragm is a dome-shaped structure that consists of several large muscles, which separates the chest from the abdomen. It also has the biggest role in your breathing process. Your internal and external intercostal muscles are the muscles that move your ribcage. These muscles are attached to your rib and between each rib. When you breathe in (inhale) air your diaphragm contracts and moves down and your intercostal muscles contract and force the ribcage up and out. The volume of the chest cavity then increases and your lungs expand. This expansion of the lungs increases their volume which reduces the pressure within them causing air to be drawn in through the nose or mouth. When you breathe out (exhale) air your diaphragm relaxes and moves upward and the intercostal muscles relax to reduce the space in the chest cavity causing the pressure in the lungs to increase which forces the carbon dioxide air out through the nose or mouth.