

## Cleansing reactions using the Buteyko Breathing Technique

Dr. Buteyko started the section about the cleansing reaction in his small manual "Method of volitional elimination of deep breathing" (Guide for Training), with the explanation of main pathological mechanisms that undermine human health:

### 1. Physiological Grounds for Clearance Reaction

Deep respiration interferes with metabolic processes in cells, causes oxygen starvation, eliminates vital substances from the body (sodium, potassium, calcium, phosphorus) to compensate internal alkaline shifts, distorts immune reactions and results in the accumulation of incompletely oxidized products and substances which come into contact with incoming protein allergens and can provoke allegro-pathological responses.

Deep respiration impairs the functioning of kidneys, liver, intestines and other organs. As a result, a large amount of metabolites is accumulated in the organism, i.e. incompletely oxidized products, waste salts, residual drugs, toxins which cause focal infections, elevate the blood cholesterol and enhance calcium and phosphorus depositions in joints and blood vessels etc.

With the liquidation of deep respiration the metabolic processes become normal improving the excretory functions and clearing the body of harmful products.... [end of quote]

He obviously claims that elimination or deficiency in essential minerals causes abnormal immune reactions and accumulation of free radicals and other toxic substances in the body. In the practical section (the last part of his manual), Buteyko suggests following practical actions in relation to cleansing reactions:

The teacher must prepare a patient for the reaction to occur so that the latter would not have been frightened, convince him to continue with training and try to eliminate the symptoms by means of the VCDB method. In some cases such symptoms are not eliminated but on the contrary get more vividly expressed after the training. It testifies to an accelerated reaction and serves as an indication for retaining the achieved training intensity. Yet the training must not be interrupted otherwise the depth of respiration will grow and the clearance reaction will not be completed. If the depth of respiration returns to initial level, then the disease will also come back. This concerns primarily such symptoms as headaches, retrosternal and other pains associated with sodium, potassium and, occasionally, with other (magnesium, calcium, phosphorus) ions deficit which have been eliminated from the organism by deep breathing. In this case the teacher will recommend corresponding preparations: sodium chloride (0,5 teaspoonful), potassium (1 g), magnesium sulfate (2 g) per glass of water (drink in little swallows until the symptoms disappear or become weaker), a teaspoonful of chalk, 2-3 tablets of calcium glycerophosphate (chew to crushes) etc. ... [end of quote]

It becomes clear here that essential minerals play a central role in the reduction of severity of the cleansing reaction. Furthermore, many other Russian Buteyko sources (written by other Russian MDs practicing the Buteyko method) speak about the precursors (early signs of the cleaning reaction). In this Buteyko manual, they are discussed in Part 2: Precursors of a Clearance Reaction.

What happens in the human body at these times? Why does the human organism require certain time to start the cleansing reaction? Surely, in case of deficiency in main minerals, the human body will try to accumulate the required minerals in order to initiate the cleansing reaction that requires minerals in order to chelate waste products out of the human organism.

Hence, there are certain in-built physiological and biochemical mechanisms that are able to borrow required minerals from their use in current physiological processes so that to

eliminate harmful substances. This is done even in cases of limited or insufficient supply of nutrients and with increased temporary deficiency in these minerals.

It is also known that Russians did not teach testing and use of supplements of essential macro-minerals during breathing retraining. Taking supplemented minerals, for historical and cultural reasons, has not been popular in the USSR and Russia. There are four macro-minerals (sodium, potassium, calcium, and magnesium) which are required for the human body on the daily basis. Sodium can be obtained with regular consumption of sea salt; potassium is abundant in vegetables, grains, nuts, legumes, and seeds. Hence, one can use extra sea salt during the reaction and eat more cooked vegetables during hard times (low CPs does not allow eating most raw foods due to lack of patience in the students). However, it is much more difficult to get enough Ca and Mg.

It is suggested here that cleansing reaction can be avoided or almost nullified when the student takes sufficient doses of Ca and Mg, as well as make steps to prevent morning hyperventilation (the situation that leads to severe losses in useful electrolytes). It requires also certain skills from the teacher to provide right explanation and tests in order to check presence of nutritional deficiencies and find optimum doses of supplements.

Best wishes, Artour.

...“Yes, that’s right,” the Doctor confirmed. “In the handbook we took the line of caution. We said that in some severe cases, the overall picture will be one of gradual improvement but some symptoms may temporarily recur in the second to eighth week or later. Such recurrences are part of the healing process. That’s what we said - but actually there’s no hard and fast rule about it. In the Lab - as you can testify - we’ve seen cases where cleansing reactions have started just a few hours after breath training gets underway. **It all depends how intensively people practise and on the severity of their condition.**” Buteyko found the passage he’d been quoting in the handbook and marked it with his fingernail. He leant back a little, making himself more comfortable. “Cleansing reactions are an interesting phenomenon. For ten years after the Discovery of the diseases of deep breathing I myself knew nothing about what we now call the cleansing processes. So I didn’t mention them anywhere. Of course patients had no knowledge of them either - and things generally went without a hitch. No-one was scared of anything. People just thought, ‘I’ve got a bit of an upset stomach’. Or maybe a patient had to empty his bowels an extra time. Maybe someone’s urine was a different colour. So what? People might have a bit more saliva. Or a period of disrupted sleep...

...“The cleansing reactions are actually quite simple. Deep breathing disrupts the metabolic process in the cells, starving them of oxygen. The body then excretes beneficial salts - sodium, potassium, magnesium, calcium, phosphorus - as it compensates for the increasingly alkaline environment. You’ll know how that movement towards alkalinity occurs, I’m sure.” The Doctor wrote down the chemical formula on a piece of paper and moved it over to Natalya. “Carbon dioxide dissolved in water is exactly the same thing as carbonic acid.” He jabbed a finger at the formula he had written. “And since deep breathing brings about a deficiency of carbon dioxide in the body, the inner environment naturally becomes more alkaline. Deep breathing distorts immune reactions since it leads to an accumulation in the body of partially oxidised metabolic compounds that cause allergic reactions when they come into contact with external allergens. When deep breathing is eliminated using the Method, the metabolic processes are normalised. The excretory organs work more efficiently, and that’s what leads to the body cleansing itself. In the majority of patients, cleansing reactions are observed through all possible channels: salivation increases, as

does lachrymation and sweating; people experience head colds, the elimination of phlegm and so on. It's a very beneficial process. But unfortunately it can be a bit painful. It's actually like the patient's illness re-run backwards. The fainthearted can take fright. **But cleansings don't occur without any let-up** - they happen when the [maximum pause](#) reaches the 10, 20, 40 and 60-second thresholds. And it's important that these thresholds do get reached! It takes some people months to get there... [Excerpts from Volume 1 Chapter 19](#)

**Cleansing reactions with severe radiation exposure**...“Something else which helped me was that the VEDB Method seems to me to be very straightforward but also uncompromising. If you work at your health you'll be healthy. If you're lazy, you'll fall ill again.”

Of course, mastering the Method will also bring you up against hidden stumbling blocks which you'll need to have the strength of character to overcome,” he continued, leaning his prematurely greying head to the right. “For example, a lot of patients are really scared of coming up against the past. When you warn them that during cleansings they'll experience a kind of accelerated re-run of their illnesses, you can get an immediate refusal. But the Method is based on two fundamental reactions: oxidation and restoration. So everything to do with the Method happens entirely on the physiological plane and is entirely explicable. It's the surest way to real longevity and perfect health. Given all that, why panic about health-giving cleansings?

“Six times between 1983 and 1987, when I was training intensively, I was completely poleaxed. This was when I had pauses of twenty two and twenty four seconds - despite the received wisdom that major cleansings occur only when the pause reaches multiples of ten seconds. While I was using the Method the stones accumulated in my kidneys passed out so violently that my ureter got blocked. I even had to be operated on. Over the four years I was also hospitalised three times for dermatological problems: the accumulated toxins and poisons were just streaming out through my skin.”

Alevtina Kovrova's plump shoulders shuddered with fright at the thought. She was listening intently.

**“But there's no reason for you to go getting scared,” said Sarantsev, who had noticed. “Don't compare your case with mine. Remember, I was a victim of severe radiation exposure. Nobody ever used to be cured of that. Lots of my workmates have been six feet under for years.”**

He went back to pick up the main thread of his story: “Since in the meantime I'd transferred to the construction department... [Excerpts from Volume 2 Chapter 34](#)

**Cleansing reactions during pregnancy**...“Any doctor who hears my account, at least any doctor who is not familiar with Dr Buteyko's theory, just says that what I experienced was ‘typical nausea and vomiting of pregnancy’.”

“Of course”, Maria Suvorova's daughter, moving so she had her back to the sun, nodded in agreement.

“No! And I must emphasise it again: NO!”, Ludmila Sokolovskaya even struck the rickety garden table with her fist. “It was a ‘typical cleansing’ episode! That's what I kept telling myself during that period and I'm saying the same thing to you today. The cleansing process is characterised by the abruptness of its beginning and end. It starts suddenly and stops suddenly. In contrast, ordinary nausea and vomiting of pregnancy begins gradually and gets

worse by degrees. It requires immense medical effort to treat it and it recedes equally slowly and the woman can still feel its effects for a long time afterwards. “Moreover, the fact that in my case, exactly three days after it had begun, on Sunday at 11.30am (the same time it had all started), it suddenly stopped just like that and I felt all light and wonderful, definitely suggests that it was a typical cleansing episode!

“A good way of checking this is to look at the control pause. Immediately before a cleansing episode, the control pause unexpectedly undergoes a dramatic rise. It can suddenly increase by two or three seconds – or more. And, as you all know only too well, ordinarily, doing the exercises to achieve an increase in the control pause of even one or two seconds is, alas, no easy matter”, Ludmila Sokolovskaya pushed back her hair, which had been ruffled by the wind, and looked meaningfully at plump Anna Zotova who squirmed uncomfortably beneath her understanding gaze. Everyone is different but getting Ms Zotova to increase her control pause by these few additional seconds would be an achievement indeed.

“Then, at the start of the cleansing process, the length of the control pause suddenly drops as abruptly as it rose. Sometimes it drops as low as the level it was at initially, back when the individual first started doing the Buteyko Method exercises.”

Anna Zotova drew her voluminous wrapper more tightly around her and shivered, although the garden in which they sat was suffused with summer heat.

“The pause remains quite short throughout the period of cleansing, because all the CO<sub>2</sub> which has been produced goes towards rebuilding the specific system of the body being cleansed at that particular time (and note that it’s important to keep practising the Method during the cleansing process, though not to excess).”

“Could you repeat that last bit again, please”, asked the actress, who was making notes in an exercise book.

“Yes, yes! One particular system of the body is being ‘retuned’ during the cleansing process”, Dr Sokolovskaya uttered the words slowly and clearly.

“The end of this process is accompanied by a sharp increase in the length of the pause. The control pause rises above the level at which the cleansing took place. The individual who has just experienced this cleansing process immediately feels they have attained a new, higher state of health. They experience a surge of energy,” the trainer’s voice became noticeably stronger. “You see, the individual has overcome their ill-health. They have ‘purged’ themselves of the accumulated ‘pathogenic grime’.”... **Excerpts from Volume 3 Chapter 22**