



# The Breath Hold Score

## The Quality of Your Breath

The Breath Hold Score, also known as a Blood Oxygen Level Test (BOLT) from the book Oxygen Advantage or the Controlled Pause from the Buteyko Method, is one potential measure of the **quality of breathing** during rest and activity. Specifically, this is an indication of central chemoreceptor sensitivity to carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>). Lower sensitivity (high tolerance) is associated with greater potential for improved physical performance. The central chemoreceptor sensitivity is flexible and can be trained.

## Determine Your Score

This test is best done upon rising in the morning or after a period of being at rest, and not following a meal.

1. Sit upright and take a few easy, relaxed breaths
2. At the end of a breath **out**, pinch the nose closed and hold the breath
3. Record the breath-hold time until the first moderate urge to breathe is experienced.

This is frequently felt as a breathing muscle contraction somewhere in the body.

*\*Note: This measure is not a test of how long the breath can be voluntarily held. It is a measure of the current physiologic respiratory urge to breathe.*

A normal score is 20-30 seconds, and a score of 40 seconds is desirable.

## Increasing Your Breath Hold Score

Right size the breath

- a. Breathe through the nose day and night
- b. Observe breathing through the day. Gently slow the breath when it feels comfortable.
- c. Structured (guided) breath-holding activities when ready

It generally takes 6-8 weeks to improve 10-15 seconds. Slow progression can be caused by:

- Excessive stress
- Being sick
- Excessive talking

*Your coach will help you determine how best to increase your Breath Hold Score.*