

CO₂ Tolerance Table

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What CO₂ Tolerance Is

The urge to breathe is triggered primarily by rising carbon dioxide levels in the blood, not by falling oxygen. CO₂ tolerance training gradually raises the threshold at which your brainstem signals distress, which in practice shows up as calmer, slower breathing under exertion and stress, and less air hunger during breath holds.

This is a training effect, not a trick: chemoreceptor sensitivity to CO₂ measurably decreases with consistent practice, documented in studies of freedivers and controlled-breathing practitioners.

Before You Start

- Practice seated or lying down, never in water, while driving, or standing.
- Skip this if pregnant, or if you have cardiovascular disease, epilepsy, or a respiratory condition, without medical clearance first.
- Mild dizziness or tingling is common early on; stop if it becomes severe.
- Consistency beats intensity — five minutes daily outperforms one long weekly session.

The Protocol

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The CO₂ Tolerance Table

Each round: inhale fully, then hold your breath for the listed time, then breathe normally for the listed recovery time before the next round. Do not force the final rounds — pull out early if the urge to breathe becomes uncomfortable rather than just noticeable.

Round	Hold	Recovery
1	0:30	1:00
2	0:45	1:00
3	1:00	1:00
4	1:15	1:00
5	1:30	1:00
6	1:45	1:00
7	2:00	—

Progression

Repeat the full table three to five times per week. Once round 7 feels manageable at 2:00, add 15 seconds to every round the following week. Most practitioners see a meaningful increase in comfortable hold time within three to four weeks of consistent practice.

Pairing With Recovery Breathing

After the table, three to five minutes of slow nasal breathing (roughly 5.5 seconds in, 5.5 seconds out) helps consolidate the parasympathetic shift and brings heart rate back down before returning to normal activity.