SAADI AKADEEMIA

Free guide · Vagus nerve

How well does your body recover from stress?

10 questions about nervous system balance and recovery.

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SELF-ASSESSMENT

How well does your body recover from stress?

The vagus nerve helps the body calm down after stress. This test indicates whether your recovery may need support.

For each question, choose one answer that best describes you over the past month. Write down the points and add them up at the end. This takes about 5 minutes.

Question	0 points	1 point	2 points
1. Do you find it hard to calm down after stress?	☐ Rarely	☐ Sometimes	☐ Often
2. Do you often breathe shallowly or hold your breath?	☐ Rarely	☐ Sometimes	☐ Often
3. Do you have bloating, constipation or irritable bowel symptoms?	☐ No	☐ Sometimes	☐ Often
4. Has your resting heart rate increased recently?	☐ No	☐ Don't know	☐ Yes
5. Do you spend time outdoors or in nature every day?	☐ Yes	☐ Sometimes	☐ Rarely
6. Do you have people close to you whom you keep in touch with regularly?	☐ Yes	☐ Sometimes	☐ Rarely
7. Do you wake up tired even after getting enough sleep?	☐ Rarely	☐ Sometimes	☐ Often
8. Do you drink alcohol more than 3 times a week?	☐ No	–	☐ Yes
9. Do you practise breathing, relaxation or meditation exercises?	☐ Every day	☐ Sometimes	☐ Never
10. Have you been under a lot of stress for a long time?	☐ No	☐ Don't know	☐ Yes

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RESULT

What your score indicates

Add up the points for all your answers. This test is not a diagnosis—it helps you identify which areas may need attention and what to discuss with your doctor.

Points	What this generally means
0–6	You seem to be recovering well.
7–13	Your nervous system may need more breaks. Try a 5-minute daily routine.
14–20	There are many signs. If your symptoms interfere with daily life, discuss them with a doctor.

If you have symptoms that interfere with everyday life, or you take medication, discuss your result with your family doctor. The Academy is an educational platform and does not provide personalised medical advice.

Read the article again: saadiacademy.ee/akadeemia/teemad/uitnarv

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HOW IT WORKS

The vagus nerve – the body’s brake pedal

The vagus nerve is the tenth cranial nerve. It connects the brain to the heart, lungs and digestive tract and helps the body calm down after stress. If the nervous system stays in “accelerator” mode for a long time, recovery may slow down.

Sign	What this may mean
High resting heart rate	The nervous system remains under stress.
Low HRV (heart rate variability)	Recovery capacity may be reduced.
Digestive symptoms during stress	The gut–brain connection works in both directions.
Shallow breathing	The body maintains a state of alertness.

HRV is an individual measure – compare yourself with yourself, not with others. A single day’s measurement does not tell you much; what matters is the trend over several weeks.

The free “Vagus Nerve” guide includes a 5-minute routine: saadiacademy.ee/tasuta-materjalid

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A PRACTICAL PLAN

Exercises supported by research

Exercise	How to do it	Time
Slow breathing	Breathe in through your nose for 4 seconds, then out for 6 seconds. A longer exhalation has a calming effect.	5 min
Belly breathing	Place your hand on your abdomen; your abdomen rises as you inhale, while your chest stays still.	3 min
Humming, singing	Vocal cord vibration is linked to branches of the vagus nerve.	2–3 min
Gargling	Gargling with water while brushing your teeth in the morning.	1 min
Cold water on the face	Cool water on your face or a cool rinse at the end of your shower. Winter swimming only when healthy, and with gradual adaptation.	30 s
Walking in nature	A relaxed pace, with your phone in your pocket.	20 min

If you have heart disease, an arrhythmia or high blood pressure, discuss cold exposure exercises with your doctor first.

Week	Focus	What to do
1	Breathing	5 minutes of slow breathing every day at the same time.
2	Add sound	Add humming or singing to your breathing practice.
3	Movement and nature	A daily walk outdoors.
4	Connection	Meeting or calling someone close to you – social connection helps you relax.

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EVERY DAY

What strains the vagus nerve and what supports it

Strains	Supports
A constant stream of notifications	Set times for checking your phone
Alcohol in the evenings	Consistent bedtimes and wake-up times
Eating in a hurry	Eating slowly and chewing your food
Prolonged sitting	Movement breaks every hour
Loneliness	Regular contact with loved ones

Digestion and the nervous system

The gut and brain communicate partly through the vagus nerve. Fibre-rich foods, fermented foods (sauerkraut, kefir) and eating calmly support this connection. If digestive symptoms persist, discuss them with your doctor.

We discuss stress, sleep and recovery in the Academy’s webinars: saadiacademy.ee/veebinarid

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WORKSHEET

7-day recovery worksheet

Daytime	Breathing (min)	Outdoors (min)	Evening tension (0–3)	Sleep (h)	Resting heart rate
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					
6.					
7.					

At the end of the week, review: on which days was your tension lower? What was different on those days?

- ☐ I found one exercise that I do every day.
- ☐ I put my phone in another room at night.
- ☐ I walked outdoors at least 3 times.
- ☐ I spoke with someone close to me at least once.

The Dr Saadi Club covers one topic each month, with a protocol and a live broadcast: saadiacademy.ee/klubi

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WHAT NEXT

Explore the topic in more depth at the Academy

The free guide “The Vagus Nerve” includes a 5-minute daily routine and a weekly tracking sheet.

Step	What it is	Where to find it
Free resources	Practical guides with worksheets: blood sugar, sleep, the vagus nerve, inflammation, lab tests.	/tasuta-materjalid
Webinars	One topic at a time, with questions and answers.	/veebinarid
Dr Saadi Club	A video lecture, a protocol and a live stream every month. A Facebook community.	/klubi
Ainevahetuse Kood	An 8-week core course for understanding metabolism and developing a daily plan.	/kursused
Book	“Veresuhkru ohtlikud saladused” (published by Varrak).	varrak.ee

Questions: kursused@synage.ee. We will respond as soon as possible. All articles: saadiacademy.ee/artiklid. © Saadi Akadeemia (OÜ Süsivesik). Sisu üle vaadatud: 2026 · järgmine ülevaatus 2027.

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