



Karuna Yoga Newsletter

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I hope you are enjoying the Karuna Yoga Newsletters. Copies of previous newsletters can be found on my website at www.iremia.net

Every newsletter will contain information on different aspects of yoga and how you can benefit from this in your daily life. If you want details on any particular ailment and how yoga can help, I am open to suggestions.

Yoga for Digestion

All the food we eat has to travel an average distance of almost 11m (35 feet) through the body. It passes through the mouth, gullet, small intestine and large intestine. Food interacts with the saliva and with the secretions of the pancreas, gall bladder and liver and is broken down by digestive enzymes and acids. During this process, nourishment is absorbed by the body. Many people suffer from digestive disorders such as indigestion, acidity, constipation, diarrhoea, irritable bowel syndrome, ulcers and ulcerative colitis.

What you eat may cause many of these digestive disorders as food can have positive or negative effects on the body. Fresh fruit and vegetables are easily digested and enable you to quickly absorb the nutrients. The heavier foods such as meat, wheat and dairy products are harder to digest and often make you feel tired and sluggish. Junk food and food out of cans and packets has a tremendously negative impact on the body.

How Yoga Can Help

In addition to considering the impact of certain foods on our digestion, regular practice of certain yoga postures can also improve digestion and help with the elimination of waste. Here are a few postures that can help alleviate certain digestive disorders.

Indigestion: - Trikonasana (Triangle), Parsvakonasana (Extended side stretch), Uttanasana (Forward bend), Prasarita Padottanasana (Wide leg forward bend), Navasana (Boat) and Supta Padangusthasana (Reclining leg, foot and toe stretch).



Constipation: - Trianga Mukhaikapada Paschimottanasana (Three part stretch), Adhomukha Svana sana (Downward-facing dog), Prasarita Padottanasana (Wide leg forward bend), Bharadvajasana (Side twist), Viparita Karani (Legs up the wall) and Sarvangasana (Shoulderstand).



Irritable Bowel Syndrome: - Sarvangasana (Shoulderstand), Halasana (Plough), Setu Bandha (Bridge), Viparita Karani (Legs up the wall), Supta Virasana (Reclining Hero) and Supta Baddhakonasana (Reclining fixed angle).



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Posture of the Month – Vrksasana (Tree posture)

Vrksa means a tree.

1. Stand in Tadasana (Mountain Pose).
2. Put the weight into the left leg. Bend the right leg at the knee and place the sole of the right foot against the inner left thigh, toes pointing downwards. **Beginners** – if you are not ready to balance on one leg there are a few options: -
 - Lean with your back against a wall and attempt the full posture.
 - Stand close to a wall and place your hand on the wall to keep you steady.
 - If using a wall is not an option, you can keep the toes of your right foot on the floor but with your knee and hip turned out.
 - If you are not ready to place your foot on your upper thigh, you can rest the sole of your foot on other parts of your leg. Take care not to press your heel against your knee as this may cause pressure on the knee joint.
3. Balance on the left leg, join the palms in front of the chest and raise the arms straight over the head. **Beginners** – you can keep your arms stretched out to the side or raise your arms without the palms touching.
4. Stay in this posture for 3 or 5 breaths or longer if you feel comfortable.
5. Lower the arms, straighten the right leg and stand again in Tadasana (mountain pose)
6. Repeat the posture by putting the weight into the right leg and placing the sole of the left foot against the inner right thigh.
7. Stay for the same length of time on both sides.

Benefits of this posture

- Tones and strengthens the leg muscles
- Strengthens the ankles
- Promotes concentration and brings a deep sense of calm to the mind
- Builds coordination and balance
- Improves overall posture and ways of standing and walking
- Brings harmony and balance to the body and mind.



RELAX YOUR WAY TO A SLIMMER BODY AND STAVE OFF A DANGEROUS AILMENT

Many scientific studies have been carried out on how yoga and its benefits, like reduced stress and better sleep, can prevent disease. One such study focuses on yoga and the metabolic syndrome. But what is this ‘metabolic syndrome’?

Abdominal obesity, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, high triglycerides, and insulin resistance are all linked to the body’s metabolism. A person who has three or more of these conditions is considered to have the syndrome. Millions of people suffer from it and the number is growing with the western world’s waistlines!

All the conditions feed off each other’s destructive habits and generally wreak havoc on the body, increasing the risk to your health. Metabolic syndrome is like a one-way ticket to three of the most disabling diseases of the 21st century: heart disease, stroke and diabetes. The leader in the syndrome is in fact insulin resistance and prediabetes. Astoundingly, nearly half the adult population in the United States suffers from prediabetes, a condition in which blood glucose levels are above normal. Most people develop full-blown diabetes within ten years of being told they have the precursor. And, not surprisingly, the numbers in the UK are also frighteningly high. Fortunately, studies show that shedding just a few pounds, only 5 to 7 percent of your body weight, can turn the metabolic tide.

So where does yoga fit into all this? Studies carried out in India where yoga is a common prescription for conditions associated with diabetes and high blood pressure, showed that ‘*The beauty of yoga doesn’t just target one marker of metabolic syndrome. They are all interrelated.*’ Not only could yoga increase insulin sensitivity and lower cholesterol, but a connection was discovered between yoga and weight loss. Stress relief and feelings of well being fostered by a regular yoga practice serve to rebalance the nervous system, the root of many modern illnesses. People under chronic stress secrete too much cortisol, the body’s primary stress hormone, which affects both the adrenal glands and the immune system. The extra cortisol nudges the abdomen into opening its fat deposits and storing more fat than it would otherwise. Abdominal fat is irrevocably linked to stress and therefore it’s not the high-impact, sweat-inducing exercise regime that we should be looking for, but the restorative, stress-free yoga that hopefully will shrink the abdomen of people with metabolic syndrome and thus reduce the risk of developing one or more of the serious health conditions.

Yoga allows the body to enter the deep, restful state it craves. When you stop agitating it, the body starts to repair itself. The secret weapon against metabolic syndrome is yoga’s soothing effect on the jangled nervous system. By relaxing your joints, your mind relaxes too. Restorative yoga is a formal way of getting people to just stop and be.

Edited from an article by writer Catherine Guthrie as published in Yoga Journal and inspired by the research of Kim Innes, an assistant professor at the Centre for the Study of Complementary and Alternative Therapies, University of Virginia.