



Karuna Yoga Newsletter

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YOGA THERAPY

CREATING INNER SPACE FOR TWISTING POSTURES

Last month I wrote about creating inner space in the body to allow for the flow of energy and to release any tension in the body. This month we'll explore twisting postures and how to open up the body before moving into a twist.

Benefits of Twisting Postures

It's that time of year again when we'll feel better after the dark months of December and January if we release some of the toxins that have built up in our bodies. The postures to concentrate on this month are the twists, which help our bodies eliminate toxins, especially through the liver and the kidneys. Twisting Postures also help to restore your spine's natural range of motion, cleanse your organs, and stimulate circulation. A sequence of twisting postures will rejuvenate your spine and give you a boost of energy. In every twisting posture, focus on keeping your pelvis level and stable so that you create the twist from your mid and upper back.

Before moving into a twist create inner space by lifting the front of your body including the sternum. Keeping your spine straight and upright, begin the twist from your lower back. Let the twist gradually unfold up your spine, as though you were walking up a spiral staircase, so that each vertebra participates in the twist.

Hold the twist on each side for a minute or so, and use your breathing to help deepen the twist: On one exhalation, draw yourself taller; on the next exhalation, twist a bit more. Feel the inner space in your body as the twist deepens. To come out of a twist, keep your spine straight and move slowly and carefully. With regular practice of this and other simple twists, your spine will regain its full potential for twisting.

Structural Benefits

Yoga twists involve the spine, as well as the hips and shoulders. Unfortunately, many people lose full spinal rotation because of living a sedentary lifestyle. If you don't lengthen the muscles, tendons, ligaments, and connective tissues to their full length at least a few times a week, they will gradually shorten and limit mobility. If you regularly practice yoga twists, you maintain the normal length and resilience of the soft tissues.

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<p>JATHARA PARIVARTANASANA (variation) Benefits - Increases the blood supply to the lower spinal region and helps the spine and the muscles of the back to function properly. Invigorates the abdominal organs and strengthens the hip muscles Contraindications – Prolapsed disc or other spinal injury.</p>	
<p>PARIVRITTA TRIKONASANA (revolved triangle) Benefits - Strengthens and stretches the legs. Stretches the hips and spine and opens the chest to improve breathing. Relieves mild back pain and stimulates the abdominal organs. Contraindications - Back or spine injury. Perform this posture only with the supervision of an experienced teacher.</p>	
<p>PARIVRITTA PARSVAKONASANA (extended side stretch) Benefits - Strengthens and stretches the legs, knees, and ankles. Stretches the spine, chest and lungs, and shoulders. Stimulates abdominal organs and increases stamina. Contraindications – It is difficult to place your hand on the floor so put both palms together with one elbow pointing down and the other pointing up. Don't turn your head to look up but instead look straight ahead with the sides of the neck lengthened evenly.</p>	
<p>ARDHA MATSYENDRASANA (Half Lord of the Fishes) Start this posture with both hands on your upper knee and pull your knee towards you using the pressure to lift your sternum and to straighten your spine. If you find it difficult to bend the lower leg, you can keep it straight and just take the opposite foot across the leg. Press down onto your hand and foot to maintain an upright spine. Benefits - Stimulates the liver and kidneys. Energises the spine and stimulates digestion. Contraindications - Back or spine injury: Perform this posture only with the supervision of an experienced teacher.</p>	
<p>MARICHYASANA III (torso and leg stretch) Start this posture by bringing the foot back as close as possible to the buttock and bring the outside edge of the foot in line with your hip. You may need to use a block behind you for your hand to maintain the lift in your spine. Benefits - Improves the functioning of the liver, spleen, pancreas, kidneys, and intestines. Tones and massages the abdominal organs. Increases energy levels and strengthens and stretches the spine alleviating any backache. Contraindications – Back or spine injury.</p>	
<p>PARIVRITTA ARDHA CHANDRASANA (revolved half-moon) Benefits - Standing on one leg strengthens the ankle and knee joints. The twist of the spinal column adjusts spinal defects, including the sacrum, which helps the knees to maintain their alignment.</p>	