



Karuna Yoga Newsletter

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YOGA THERAPY YOGA POSTURES TO PRACTISE AT HOME

We all feel better after attending a yoga class but finding inspiration on your mat when practising alone can be difficult. Your initial thought maybe not knowing where to start or not being able to remember any of the postures you did in the class. The first thing to realise is that you don't have to commit to any particular period of time. If you have fifteen minutes to spare then this is enough to get you started on a home practice.

Home Practice

When practising yoga at home it is always better to focus on the classic postures. The ones you have done many times in your yoga classes. The classic postures cover all the basic positions of yoga: standing, sitting, forward bends, twists, inversions, back bends and lying down. The regular practice of these postures stimulates and activates all the organs, tissues, and cells of the body. The mind becomes alert and strong, the body healthy and active.

Stages of Learning Yoga

New students must learn that at first postures are practised at the level of the anatomical body alone – the stage called *arambhavastha*. This beginner's stage is important and should not be hurried through. Beginners should be primarily concerned with getting their movements right. To learn to grasp the whole posture and not get lost in the finer details. It is more important to strive for stability within a posture. This provides a strong foundation. I will explain the intermediate and advanced stages of yoga in the following months.

Standing Postures

Start with standing postures to strengthen the leg muscles and joints and to increase the suppleness and strength of the spine. The standing postures create rotational and flexing movements so that the spinal muscles and inter-vertebral joints are kept mobile and well-aligned. The arteries of the legs are stretched, increasing the blood supply to the lower limbs, and this helps to prevent thrombosis in the calf muscles. The standing postures also tone the cardio-vascular system. The lateral wall of the heart is fully stretched, increasing the supply of fresh blood to the heart.

Whenever you practise yoga, take care not to hold your breath because this may cause tension and heaviness in your head. This is particularly common when practicing standing postures and forward bends. Keep your breath flowing slowly.

In this newsletter, I have given you a selection of the classic standing postures and in the following months I will provide details of the classic sitting postures, forward bends, twists, inversions, and back bends. To do a full practice it is important to include a selection of all these different types of postures. Start slowly with standing postures and gradually build up your own home practice.

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YOGA POSTURES TO PRACTISE AT HOME

<p>TADASANA (mountain posture) Keep your head and spine in a straight line. Pull your lower abdomen in and up. Lift your sternum and broaden your chest. Press your heels and the mounds of your toes down on the floor. This will place equal pressure on the outer and inner edges of the feet. Hold for 20-30 seconds.</p>	
<p>TRIKONASANA (triangle) Turn your left foot in slightly and your right foot out to 90 degrees. Firm your thighs and turn your right thigh outward. Exhale and stretch to the right, bending from the hip. Rest your right hand on your shin, ankle, or the floor. Stretch your left arm toward the ceiling. Look down at the floor if you have high blood pressure. Hold for 20-30 seconds and then do the other side.</p>	
<p>VIRABHADRASANA 2 (warrior 2) Turn your left foot in slightly and your right foot out to 90 degrees. Exhale and bend your right knee over the right ankle, so that the shin is perpendicular to the floor. If possible, bring the right thigh parallel to the floor. Stretch the arms parallel to the floor. Don't lean the torso over the right thigh. Keep the sides of the torso equally long and the shoulders directly over the pelvis. Turn the head to the right and look out over the fingers. Hold for 30 seconds and then do the other side.</p>	
<p>PARSVAKONASANA (extended side stretch) Bring yourself into Virabhadrasana 2, as above. Exhale and place your forearm on your right thigh or take your hand to the floor or a block. Stretch your left arm over your head and stretch from your fingertips to your toes. Hold for 30 seconds and then do the other side.</p>	
<p>PARSVOTTANASANA (intense chest stretch) Turn your left foot in 45 to 60 degrees and your right foot out to 90 degrees. Exhale and rotate your torso to the right, bringing your pelvis level with the front edge of your mat. Exhale and lean the torso forward from the groins over the right leg. Stop when the torso is parallel to the floor. If it isn't possible for you to touch the floor, support your hands on a pair of blocks or the seat of a folding chair. Hold your maximum position for 15 to 30 seconds, then come up with an inhalation. Then go to the left side.</p>	
<p>ADHO MUKHA SVANASANA (downward dog) Come onto your hands and knees. Set your knees directly below your hips and your hands slightly forward of your shoulders. Spread your palms and curl your toes under. Exhale and lift your knees from the floor. At first keep the knees slightly bent and the heels lifted away from the floor. Lift the sitting bones toward the ceiling and draw the inner legs up into the groins. Exhale and push your top thighs back and stretch your heels onto or down toward the floor. Straighten your knees but be sure not to lock them. Keep the head between the upper arms; don't let it hang. Stay in this posture anywhere from 1 to 3 minutes. Then bend your knees to the floor with an exhalation and rest in balasana (child).</p>	