



Karuna Yoga Newsletter

Issue no: 109

February 2018

YOGA THERAPY MORE ABOUT KNEES

In last month's newsletter I wrote about osteoarthritis of the knees and how to help and possibly avoid this condition. This month we'll look at other aspects of the knees that could possibly lead to problems.

Hyperextended Knee Joints

This is where the knee hits back and the legs sink into the back of the knee joints. The knees have a feeling of being locked. The back of the leg is longer than the front of the leg and the front thighs lack muscular support. The calf area of the leg slopes backward and there is no longer a straight line from the ankle to the hip and this prevents the flow of energy through the leg. It is very helpful to "soften" or micro bend the knees in all standing yoga postures if you have this condition. This will restore the straight line from the ankle to the hip. Softening or micro bending the knees also allows you to rotate the thighs outwards in most standing postures. If the knee is locked, you'll find it difficult to do this.

Knock Knees

This is where the knees drop inward. The inner leg is longer than the outer leg. This puts pressure on the inner part of the knees and often causes problems with the meniscus in the knee. The **meniscus** is a piece of cartilage that provides a cushion between your thighbone (femur) and shinbone (tibia). There are two **menisci** in each knee joint. They can be damaged or torn during activities that put pressure on the knee joint. In yoga practices the knee must be set just right. You can strain ligaments from doing yoga postures incorrectly. It is always important to practice standing postures with careful attention to the alignment of your feet and knees. Practice standing yoga postures to strengthen around the knees. Focus particularly on the lunge positions where the knee is bent and directly aligned over the ankle. The postures Parsvakonasana and Virabhadrasana II reinforce the tendon, ligament, and cartilage around the knee.







Bowed Legs

From the centre line of the body, the legs curve out and the knees turn in. The outer legs are longer than the inner legs. The arches and ankles are collapsed. Having bowed knees does not cause problems with the menisci in the same way as having knock knees. To improve the correct alignment of your legs, develop a yoga practice of standing postures that will strengthen the structures around your knees.

Because it is a shallow joint, the knee relies on strong ligaments and muscles to hold it together. The knee joint needs to be moved through its range of motion regularly to keep it healthy. Disuse often causes the cartilage, then the bone underneath it, to deteriorate. Iyengar yoga helps to alleviate knee problems, such as inflammation and pain from tendon, ligament, and meniscus tears.

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POSTURES TO STRENGTHEN THE STRUCTURES AROUND THE KNEES

<p>ANANTASANA (side leg lift) Start by lying sideways and pressing both feet onto the wall. Align the ankles, knees, hips, waist, and shoulders. Stretch out the lower arm and lift the head and bend the elbow to place the hand above the ear to support the head. Raise the upper leg either holding the big toe or using a belt.</p>	
<p>DANDASANA (staff) Practise with your feet pressing into the wall. If your hips or hamstrings are tight, sit on a bolster and use blocks for your hands. Press your feet onto the wall to extend the knees and knee ligaments as much as possible.</p>	
<p>ANJANEYASANA (low lunge) Practise this posture to get the correct position of the knee directly above the ankle. The postures with bent knees will help to eliminate excess fluid in the knee and create mobility for knee flexion, extension, and rotation.</p>	 <p>MARTY SCONDUTO</p>
<p>VIRABHADRASANA II (warrior II) This posture builds up strength and flexibility in the legs and knee joints. Bend the front knee slowly ensuring you maintain correct alignment. Your knee should be above your ankle and maintain a straight line from your hip to your knee. Micro bend the back knee.</p>	 <p>CHRIS ANDRE</p>
<p>PARSVAKONASANA (extended side angle) If you have weak knees you can place the front foot on blocks next to a wall. Elevating the forward foot lessens the weight on the bent knee. Keep the alignment from ankle to knee and avoid letting the knee drop inwards. Micro bend the back knee.</p>	 <p>RORY EARNSHAW</p>
<p>PRASARITA PADOTTANASANA (intense leg stretch) This posture cools the body and the brain, providing a feeling of tranquillity. It strengthens the knee joint and makes the hip joint supple. Again, remember the micro bend in your knees.</p>	 <p>RORY EARNSHAW</p>