



Karuna Yoga Newsletter

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YOGA THERAPY YOGA FOR OSTEOPOROSIS

It's been four years since I wrote about the benefits of yoga in connection with osteoporosis. My main source of information is taken from the book "Yoga for Osteoporosis" by Loren Fishman MD and Ellen Saltonstall. Other sources are WDDTY (What Doctors Don't Tell You) and the website www.saveourbones.com. If you go to that website, you sign up for a free eBook "Stop the Bone Thieves", get a free email course on how to prevent and reverse bone loss naturally and scientifically, and free vital osteoporosis articles, news, and updates. **I highly recommend this website for both prevention and cure of osteoporosis.**

What is Osteoporosis?

Osteoporosis is a disease characterized by low bone mass and structural deterioration of bone tissue. This leads to fragile bones and an increase in fractures, especially of the hip, spine, and wrist, although any bone can be affected. It is not a disease that affects just women, as men also suffer from osteoporosis. It is always better to prevent rather than cure any illness, but it is never too late to strengthen your bones.

Why Yoga for Osteoporosis?

We build most of our bone density in our teens and twenties and then slowly it diminishes. Impact exercise is often recommended to stop bone loss. The problem with impact exercise, such as jogging, is that it can lead to osteoarthritis as we get older. **This is the situation:** if we exercise with impact, our bones may stay strong, but our joints will become painful and difficult to move. If we stay away from impact exercise, we will save our joints, but our bones may deteriorate.

What to do? Yoga is the answer for people of all ages, but especially for people over 50, who want to stay strong, flexible, and pain-free. In yoga the joints are moved to an ever-expanding range, circulating their fluid, and stimulating renewal of cartilage, tendons, and ligaments. At the same time, the bones are isometrically subjected to the same forces as involved in impact exercise. Isometric exercise is when a muscle group is tensed against another muscle group or an immovable object. In yoga, however, the forces are applied without any impact. Yoga is an excellent solution for both osteoarthritis and osteoporosis.

Vitamin D3 and Vitamin K2

Many studies have been published showing that low levels of Vitamin D3 increases the risk of mobility problems. For people with osteoarthritis or osteoporosis it's even more important since vitamin D3 combined with vitamin K2 is the most important way of repairing damaged bones and joints. The vitamin D3 and K2 combination works by sending calcium direct to the bones (where it's needed the most), instead of allowing it to clog the arteries which can lead to arteriosclerosis (a build-up of plaque on the inside of blood vessels leading to hardening of the arteries). The main problem identified in the studies was that people were not getting enough of these vitamins through sunlight and diet.

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POSTURES THAT FOCUS ON BONE STRENGTH

The instructions for doing yoga include actions that are opposite. You are often asked to press down and to reach up. The goal is to create a stable and balanced pressure on the bones, which makes the postures safer and more effective. The benefits of yoga for osteoporosis come from the pull of muscle on bone. We need to engage a muscular strength that contracts and brings the different parts of the body toward the centre by pulling on the bones.

TADASANA (mountain)

Tadasana is a foundational posture where we stand tall with inner and outer strength.

We actively press down into our feet which will initiate a natural lift in the rest of the body. We keep the kneecaps facing forward to protect the knees. Pulling up the quadriceps strengthens the knees. Keep the inner body lifting while still pressing down into the feet.

Come into Tadasana whenever you need a moment to renew your focus and to realign yourself.



VRKSASANA (TREE POSTURE)

The purpose of practising Vrksasana is to strengthen the legs and hips and to improve balance without risk of falling.

Stand firmly on one foot and pull up the muscles of the standing leg. Stretching your arms up or out to the side will give an outward expansion from the centre of your body out through your arms and legs. Enjoy the challenge of balancing with the right amount of effort. Use a wall or a chair for extra support if needed.



UTKATASANA (CHAIR POSTURE)

This posture works the entire pelvis and all posterior portions of the spine's vertebrae. It strengthens the quadriceps and builds inner and outer strength. Always take care to align the knees keeping them straight forward over the second toes.

Align the lower back – not too arched nor too curved forward. Practice this posture on your mat facing away from a wall. Adjust the distance so that when you bend your knees and flex your hips, your buttocks rest against the wall. Your feet are hip-width apart and parallel. Raise your arms to horizontal in one vigorous movement.



TRIKONASANA (TRIANGLE POSTURE)

This posture strengthens the spine and builds stamina, focus and balance. The wider your stance, the more freedom you'll have in the hips but don't go too wide as you may lose stability.

Keep your legs straight but micro bend the knee. Keep your leg muscles firm and your torso lined up directly above your front leg. Bend from the hips, not the waist. The weight should be equal on both feet. Keep the front of the body open and keep the chest open, not allowing the chest to drop forward.

If you feel stress in your shoulder or neck when lifting your arm, keep your hand on your hip and focus on opening the chest by rolling the shoulder back.

