



# Karuna Yoga Newsletter

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## YOGA THERAPY

### THE IMPORTANCE OF YOUR UPPER BACK AND THORACIC SPINE

I have decided to write once again about the importance of strengthening the upper back which contains the thoracic vertebrae. Your thoracic vertebrae are the part of your spine that runs from the base of your neck to the area just below the middle of your back. You have twelve thoracic vertebrae which are placed between your cervical (neck) and lumbar (lower back) vertebrae. The position of the scapulae (shoulder blades) is of high importance in posture. In the Forward Head Posture (see below) the scapulae begin to slide forward causing the back part of the spine to push outward. This can result in neck pain and reduced shoulder mobility. A rounded upper back always has out-of-place scapulae as part of the problem.

Firstly, we need to correct bad posture issues.

**Forward Head Posture (FHP).** This is where the head comes forward causing rounded shoulders and a rounded thoracic spine (kyphosis). This is a result of leaning forward to look at our computers, phones and other devices. When the head gets thrust forward, the thoracic vertebrae follow and then the muscles in the neck, shoulders and upper back pull tight to compensate and this causes pain and discomfort. This kind of postural misalignment increases the chance of bone density loss in the vertebrae because of the pressure of muscle on bone.

**Slumping Forward** is the postural mistake made by so many people. Do you remember your mother telling you to sit up straight? Straightening your upper back is more than just to improve your appearance. In addition to the pain it can cause, rounded, humped shoulders and FHP can affect your breathing and digestion. As your chest collapses inward and your upper back rounds out, it makes it difficult to inhale deeply. This also results in your digestive organs getting cramped.







#### **Benefits of Improving the Posture of your Upper Back**

Being able to take deep breaths will help to alkalize the body and this improves bone health.

Having a good digestive system is essential for your bones to receive the nutrients from your food.

Yoga postures that help to strengthen your upper back and that open and lift your chest will allow you to breathe deeply. Aligning your spine so that your back muscles are putting pressure in the correct areas will stimulate bone growth and strength in your vertebrae.

## YOGA POSTURES TO STRENGTHEN THE UPPER BACK

<p><b>BHUJANGASANA (cobra)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthens the spine</li> <li>• Stretches chest and lungs, shoulders and abdomen</li> <li>• Opens the heart and lungs</li> <li>• Therapeutic for asthma</li> </ul>	 <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">MARTIN SCODUTO</p>
<p><b>SALABHASANA (locust)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthens the muscles of the spine</li> <li>• Stretches the shoulders and chest</li> <li>• Improves posture</li> </ul>	 <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">MARTY SCODUTO</p>
<p><b>DHANURASANA (bow)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stretches and opens the entire front of the body</li> <li>• Strengthens the back muscles</li> <li>• Improves posture</li> </ul>	 <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">BOBY LARSON</p>
<p><b>EKA PADA RAJAKAPOTASANA (king pigeon)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stretches the chest, shoulders and neck</li> <li>• Opens the shoulders and chest</li> <li>• Stimulates the abdominal organs</li> </ul>	 <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">MARTY SCODUTO</p>
<p><b>PARIGHASANA (gate)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stretches the spine</li> <li>• Opens the shoulders</li> <li>• Stimulates the lungs</li> </ul>	 <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">DAVID MARTINEZ</p>
<p><b>ARDHA UTTANASANA (standing half forward bend)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stretches the front of the body</li> <li>• Strengthens the back</li> <li>• Improves posture</li> <li>• Stimulates the digestion</li> </ul>	 <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">DAVID MARTINEZ</p>
<p><b>ARDHA CHANDRASANA (half-moon)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthens the spine</li> <li>• Stretches the shoulders, chest and spine</li> <li>• Improves coordination and sense of balance</li> <li>• Improves digestion</li> </ul>	 <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">MARTIN SCODUTO</p>
<p><b>ARDHA MATSYENDRASANA (half lord of the fishes)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stimulates the liver and kidneys</li> <li>• Stretches the shoulders, hips and neck</li> </ul> <p>Energises the spine</p>	 <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">ORIS ANDRE</p>