



Karuna Yoga Newsletter

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YOGA THERAPY

PROPRIOCEPTION AND BALANCING

I had never heard the word proprioception until Marilyn, one of my yoga students, said it in class one day last year. Proprioception is the perception and awareness of the position and movement of the body. Can you close your eyes and touch your nose? Proprioception facilitates the ability to accurately complete a movement without any visual or tactile input. So, what part of our body tells our brain where our body is and how it is moving?

Proprioceptive senses are the senses of position and movement of our limbs and trunk, the sense of effort, the sense of force, and the sense of heaviness. These senses combine to provide us with a mental image or understanding of the physical actions and positions of the body and to create physical stability and balance.

Receptors involved in proprioception are in the skin, muscles, and joints. These provide your brain with information about the contraction of muscles - both in stillness and in movement.

Our eyesight also contributes to proprioception. When we see our body, this additional layer of information confirms and refines our physical proprioceptive sense. By comparing the two sources of information (physical and visual) our brain knows that the limbs it sees are the same limbs that it feels.

Proprioception, Stability, And Falls

Proprioception is facilitated by muscle mass and proprioception typically declines with the loss of muscle mass that comes with aging.

Proprioception helps you maintain your balance and avoid falls.








Proprioception worsens as muscle mass and strength decrease with aging. This results in reduced standing stability and balance and a higher likelihood of falls. Exercise designed to improve stability, balance, and lower body strength can preserve proprioception and reduce the risk of falls.

Proprioception can be actively improved through regular exercise. In addition to the direct stimulation of new bone growth and an increase in muscle strength, targeted physical activity is a necessity for improving bone health and preventing fractures.

Sharpening your proprioception through regular exercise such as yoga will improve your ability to move through the world with stability and certainty.

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YOGA POSTURES TO IMPROVE PROPRIOCEPTION AND BALANCE

<p>PHALAKASANA (plank) This posture helps to make your body solid and strong. It generates energy throughout the whole body. It strengthens your belly muscles.</p>	
<p>PURVOTTANASANA (upward plank) This posture can be done with straight legs or bent knees. It strengthens the arms, wrists and femur bones. It stretches the shoulders and chest. Avoid if you have wrist problems</p>	
<p>VASISTHASANA (side plank) This posture requires both strength and balance and it helps to develop powerful core muscles. Avoid if you have wrist problems.</p>	
<p>ANJANEYASANA (low lunge) To improve balance, practice this posture facing a wall. Press the big toe of the front foot against the wall and stretch your arms up, fingertips to the wall. If your palms are not flat on the mat, use blocks under your hands. This allows you to move the sternum forward and increases the stretch in the hip flexors. Lifting your knee off the mat will also increase the stretch.</p>	
<p>PARIPURNA NAVASANA (boat) This posture strengthens the abdomen, hip flexors, and spine. Strengthening the core muscles helps with balancing postures. You can use a belt around the feet to help you stay in this posture.</p>	
<p>PARIVRTTA TRIKONASANA (revolved triangle) This posture helps to develop proprioception and balance. It strengthens the legs. It stretches the legs, hips and spine and opens the chest to improve breathing.</p>	
<p>NATARAJASANA (lord of the dance) Hold your ankle with your hand or use a belt. Establish your balance and keep your gaze on a point as you extend forward. It strengthens the femurs (thigh bones), legs and ankles. It improves your proprioception and balance.</p>	
<p>GARUDASANA (eagle) Strengthens and stretches the ankles and calves. Stretches the thighs, hips, shoulders, and upper back. Improves concentration and improves sense of balance.</p>	