



Karuna Yoga Newsletter

Issue no: 127

December 2019

YOGA THERAPY





THE SHOULDERS and STRETCHING

The shoulder joints are two of the most mobile joints in the entire body, making them prone to instability. The ball of the ball-and-socket arrangement is larger than the socket, increasing articulation but also making the shoulder reliant on the strength and flexibility of tendons, ligaments, and muscles to hold it in place.

Injury, inflammation, arthritis, lack of use, overuse, and repetitive motions, can result in these tissues becoming weak, tight, or inflamed, causing immobility and shoulder pain. Unstable, tight shoulders have an effect on bone health and overall health. They include the following:

- Tight, immobile shoulders can cause an unstable lower back. To keep the spine aligned and your body upright, the lower back should provide stability while the shoulders provide mobility. But when the lower back is unstable, the shoulders tighten up as the body must hold you up in some capacity. Tight shoulders then allow the lower back to become weak and unstable. This is an example of stability and mobility being essential for each other's full function to be realised. Your body needs regular exercise to function optimally and to build strong bones, and shoulder problems can prevent a healthy exercise routine. Lack of use is just as damaging to the shoulder as overuse.
- Science confirms that stretching helps to relieve stress, and there are real physiological benefits to stretching regularly, especially if you breathe correctly while you do it. When you are tense and stressed, your body responds by tightening various muscles, especially those in the shoulders, neck, and lower back. You may experience pain in these areas, and they may feel hard and tight to the touch. These areas of the body where tension is held compromises blood circulation as blood vessels get compressed under the muscle tension, and the muscles become oxygen-starved and unable to function properly. This can also cause inflammation.
- In addition, chronically contracted muscles can give rise to misaligned joints and poor posture as the dysfunctional muscles literally pull the skeleton awry. Muscles that are compromised are also prone to injury because they lack suppleness.
- Every bodily system depends on blood flow for oxygen, nutrients, delivery of immune system cells, response to injury, and more. The constriction caused by stress-tightened muscles impedes this crucial flow, and gentle, regular stretching releases this tightness and allows the arteries and capillaries to open and supply the tired muscles with much-needed blood.
- The circulation system is also important in carrying away toxins and pathogens. Without motion and movement and stretching, this cleansing effect is not performed effectively, and acidic toxins can build up in your body. This contributes to chronic acidosis, a state of imbalanced body pH that is the primary cause of osteoporosis and many other health problems.

YOGA POSTURES TO RELEASE TIGHTNESS IN THE SHOULDERS

<p>SETU BANDHA (bridge)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stretches the shoulders, chest, neck, and spine • Calms the brain and helps alleviate stress • Reduces anxiety, fatigue, backache, headache, and insomnia • Therapeutic for asthma, and osteoporosis 	
<p>MARJARYASANA (cat)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stretches the back torso and neck • Provides a gentle massage to the shoulders, spine and belly organs 	
<p>BITILASANA (cow) Protect your neck by broadening across your shoulder blades and drawing your shoulders down, away from your ears.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stretches the front torso, shoulders and neck • Provides a gentle massage to the spine and belly organs 	
<p>ADHO MUKHA SVANASANA (downward dog)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calms the brain and helps relieve stress • Stretches the shoulders, hamstrings, calves, arches, and hands • Helps prevent osteoporosis 	
<p>DOLPHIN</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helps to relieve stress and mild depression • Stretches the shoulders, hamstrings, calves, and arches • Strengthens the arms and legs • Helps prevent osteoporosis 	
<p>SALABHASANA (locust)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stretches the shoulders, chest, belly, and thighs • Improves posture • Helps relieve stress 	
<p>DHANURASANA (bow)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stretches the entire front of the body, ankles, thighs and groins, abdomen and chest, shoulders and throat, and deep hip flexors (psoas) • Strengthens the back muscles • Improves posture • Stimulates the organs of the abdomen and neck 	
<p>UTKATASANA (chair)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthens the ankles, thighs, calves, and spine • Stretches shoulders and chest • Strengthens shoulders and arms 	