



# Karuna Yoga Newsletter

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## TWISTING POSTURES

It's that time of year again when our bodies will feel better if we release some of the toxins that have built up over the winter months. The postures to concentrate on this month are the twists, which help our bodies eliminate toxins, especially through the liver and the kidneys. Twisting Postures also help to restore your spine's natural range of motion, cleanse your organs, and stimulate circulation.

### Benefits Of Twisting Postures

- Twisting postures take us deep into the spine – rotating, twisting, squeezing and strengthening.
- Regular practice of twisting postures helps to increase the flexibility of your back and hips and can ease a painful, stiff or fused lumbar spine.
- Twisting postures also massage, tone and rejuvenate the abdominal organs. The twists squeeze the liver and kidneys and then encourage fresh blood to flow into these organs.

### A Twist a Day

To maintain or restore normal spinal rotation, I recommend that you practice a simple spinal twist once or twice a day. (Please take care if you have a spinal disc injury and check with your doctor before practicing twists of any kind). Try practising the twist **Bharadvajasana** sitting on a chair because this is easy to integrate into everyday life.



Even though you may think this is an easy twist, there are a few points to keep in mind. Most important is to lengthen the spine; a slumped-over posture significantly limits spinal rotation. So begin by sitting sideways on an armless chair and draw your spine straight up toward the crown of your head. Also, make sure that your spine is perpendicular to the chair seat, neither leaning to the side nor to the front or back.

The second important point to remember is that each section of the spine has a different rotational mobility. The neck is the most mobile in twisting. The middle of the back has ribs attached, so this part of the back is unable to twist as freely as the neck. The lower spine is the most limited. So to ensure that you don't over twist in the more mobile parts of your spine, begin the twist from your lower back. Let the twist gradually unfold up your spine, as though you were walking up a spiral staircase, so that each vertebra participates in the twist. If you twist too quickly your neck will do most of the twisting, and other sections of your spine can remain "stuck".

Hold the twist on each side for a minute or so, and use your breathing to help deepen the twist: On one exhalation, draw yourself taller; on the next exhalation, twist a bit more. With regular practice of this and other simple twists, your spine will regain its full potential for twisting.

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## Posture of the Month – Parivrtta Trikonasana

**Parivrtta** means revolved, turned round or back. **Trikona** is a triangle. This is the revolving triangle posture.

1. Stand in Tadasana. Take a deep inhalation and then step or jump your legs apart. Do not take your legs too wide apart as this pose is slightly easier with a narrower stance and will help you to balance in the posture.
2. Stretch out your arms sideways in line with your shoulders.
3. Turn your left foot in and your right foot out but keep your hips facing forward.
4. Inhale and as you exhale stretch over to the right, keeping your legs straight and pressing down into your left foot.
5. Swing your left arm forward and place your right hand on your right hip.
6. **Intermediates:** -twist your body and place your left hand on the floor near the outer side of your right foot. Stretch your right arm up in line with the left arm. Turn your head and look at your right thumb.
7. **Beginners:** -bring your left hand to the inner foot, whether on the floor or on a support like a block or folding chair. Keep your right hand on your hip. Carefully twist your body to the right. Keep facing forward or looking down.
8. Stay in this posture for five breaths.
9. Inhale, lift the left hand from the floor or your leg, rotate your body back to its original position and stand with your feet facing forward.
10. Repeat this posture on the other side.

### Cautions

Do not practice this posture if you have any spinal injury.

### Benefits of this posture

- Tones the thighs, calves and hamstring muscles
- Increases the blood supply to the lower spinal region
- Helps the spine and the muscles of the back to function properly
- Relieves pains in the back
- Opens the chest to improve breathing
- Invigorates the abdominal organs
- Strengthens the hip muscles
- Improves sense of balance



### Improving Your Twists

The muscles on the side of your abdomen called the obliques play a big part in twisting postures. To strengthen these muscles practice the full or modified versions of Jathara Parivartanasana (Revolved Abdomen Pose).



For the full pose, lie on your back, arms outstretched and stretch your legs straight up toward the ceiling. Lower your straight legs toward the floor on one side (for the maximum challenge, don't quite touch the floor). Keep stretching out through the soles of the feet; and when you lift the legs back up to vertical, be sure to press the lower back flat.

For the modified, milder version, lie on your back, with arms stretched out to the sides at shoulder height and knees pulled up toward your chest. Exhaling, smoothly drop both knees to one side, keeping your knees pulled up towards your armpit. On your next exhalation, lift your legs back up towards your chest, flattening your back waist into the floor.