



Karuna Yoga Newsletter

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Repetitive Stress Injuries

Yoga is a powerful tool for combating repetitive stress injuries at work. Performing a repetitive movement like clicking a mouse while working on the computer or using your thumb to send messages on your mobile telephone can cause microscopic tears in tendons, muscles and other soft tissues. Without adequate time to rest and repair themselves, these tears can become inflamed and the gradual accumulation of such micro traumas can lead to the ailment known as repetitive stress injury. A single mouse click isn't stressful, but clicking a mouse for hours – particularly when you're sitting with poor posture can result in pain, tingling, and numbness characteristic of repetitive stress injury.

Yoga can be a powerful tool for preventing and relieving these kinds of injuries. A regular yoga practice cultivates the strength and suppleness your body needs to work at a computer all day. Yoga's emphasis on proper alignment is also important, because sitting with good posture allows for more freedom of movement and reduces the strain on muscles and joints. Yoga also teaches you to be present in your body so that you're more likely to pay attention to early signals of discomfort. Pay attention to your body as you perform daily tasks. You might find that your habits such as hunching over the keyboard or telephone or tensing your shoulders and face are contributing to your symptoms. Learning to recognise and break these patterns can bring relief. Take some regular breaks during the day to do these simple postures at your desk or at home.

Seated Backbend

Sit tall in your chair, feet flat on the floor. On an exhalation, press your palms into your thighs and your sitting bones into the chair as you lift the centre of your chest toward the ceiling, keeping your neck long. Inhale back to the starting position. Repeat three to five times, moving with the breath.

Hugging Arms

Inhale and extend your arms at shoulder height, relaxing the shoulders down. Exhale and hug yourself with the right arm on top, dropping your chin to your chest and lifting your chest to meet your chin. Inhale and extend your arms. Repeat three to five times, changing the arm on top each time.

Gomukhasana on a Chair (see over for full posture)

If you do this at your workplace, keep a scarf at your desk to hold between your hands if they don't comfortably come together behind your back. Hold for three to five breaths and then repeat on the other side.

Downward Dog using a desk, table or back of a chair

Place your hands on the desk, table or back of a chair. Walk your feet back until your upper body forms a right angle with your lower body. Inhale deeply, then exhale and extend your hips back, lengthening your spine.

Posture of the Month

Gomukhasana-Cow Face

Go means cow and Mukha means face. Gomukha means one whose face resembles a cow, narrow at one end and broad at the other.

Technique

1. Come into a kneeling position and then cross your right knee over the left, stacking the right knee on top of the left. Sit in between your feet using a block if necessary. Sit evenly on your sitting bones.
2. Inhale and stretch your right arm straight out to the right, parallel to the floor. Roll the shoulder back and down, then slide your arm up your back until it is parallel to your spine. The back of your hand will be between your shoulder blades.
3. Now inhale and stretch your left arm straight up toward the ceiling, palm turned back. Lift actively through your left arm, then with an exhalation, bend the elbow and reach down for the right hand. If possible, hook the right and left fingers.
4. Lift the left elbow toward the ceiling. Firm your shoulder blades against your back ribs and lift your chest. Try to keep the left arm right beside the left side of your head.
5. Stay in this posture about 1 minute. Release the arms, uncross the legs, and repeat with the arms and legs reversed for the same length of time. Remember that whichever leg is on top, the same-side arm is lower.

Contraindications and Cautions

Do not practice this posture if you have serious neck or shoulder problems.

Beginner's Tip

Beginners often have a difficult time getting both sitting bones to rest evenly on the floor, which can make it difficult for the knees to stack on top of each other evenly. When the pelvis is tilted, the spine can't properly extend. Use a folded blanket or blocks to lift the sitting bones off the floor and support them evenly. If you have a problem hooking the right and left fingers behind your back, use a belt as an extension and slowly move your hands along the belt.

Preparatory Postures

Baddha Konasana – cobbler's posture

Supta Baddha Konasana – laying back in cobbler's posture

Virasana – Hero's posture

Supta Virasana - laying back in Hero's posture

Supta Padangusthasana – stretching the legs up and to the side while on your back

Upavista Konasana – seated wide leg forward bend

Variations

From the full posture, lean forward and lay the front torso down on the inner top thigh. Stay for 20 seconds, then inhale and come up.

Benefits of this posture

- ❖ Stretches the ankles, hips and thighs, shoulders, armpits and triceps
- ❖ Cures cramp in the legs
- ❖ Makes the leg muscles elastic
- ❖ Straightens the back
- ❖ Expands the chest
- ❖ Shoulder joints move more freely



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