



Karuna Yoga Newsletter

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YOGA THERAPY

LOWER BACK PAIN

Many people suffer with lower back problems mainly because of a sedentary lifestyle. Choosing to learn and practise yoga is a positive step to helping the health of your back. The Sanskrit word '**Yoga**' refers to union between the body, breath, mind and emotions. Yoga is a system of knowledge about well-being that will help you to alleviate or prevent back pain. We need to learn to correctly stretch, strengthen and relax our muscles. You may not feel an improvement immediately but your body will start to love its new flexibility and strength. Yoga not only helps your back but also helps other parts of your body, your mind, breathing and emotions.

In studies carried out it was found that those people who practised yoga at least twice a week would gain the most long-term benefit. It may be difficult to attend a yoga class twice a week but try and practise the suggested yoga postures at home even if you only have a spare ten minutes.

The main thing during the class or your own practice is to be aware of your own body. If you feel a sharp pain, you should stop doing that particular yoga posture. Relax and breathe. Never move into pain or tension. Move slowly into all yoga postures, feeling your muscles stretching and lengthening. Always move on an exhalation of breath as this helps the muscles in your body to relax. Maintain slow, steady breathing and feel your muscles relaxing into the posture. Please ask for help if you are not feeling comfortable in any posture in the yoga class.

COMMON CAUSES

The common causes of lower backache are either stiffness in the ligaments or muscles of the lower back or weak abdominal muscles. Poor posture and lack of exercise usually lead to tight and swollen back muscles, resulting in pain in this area.

BRING YOGA INTO YOUR DAILY LIFE

- Stand tall and lengthen the front of your body.
- Stand evenly on both feet bringing equal length to both sides of your trunk.
- Stand with your feet parallel with strong legs and shoulders relaxed.
- Breathe steadily and evenly as quality breathing increases your energy levels.
- Remember to use the **mula bandha** every time you lift something.
- Keep your face relaxed as tension in the facial muscles often reflects tension in the body.
- Mental attitude is important. Try to be positive and so reduce depression and anxiety.

Importance of the Bandhas

Mula Bandha - A well functioning mula bandha has a deeply stabilizing impact on health and wellbeing. It is support for your internal organs, stability for your pelvis, and helps to strengthen your back.

Uddiyana Bandha –Activating the uddiyana bandha will help to strengthen the muscles covering the front of the abdominal wall from the pelvis to the bottom ribs.

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POSTURES THAT HELP RELIEVE AND PREVENT LOWER BACK PAIN

<p>Supta Padangusthasana (reclining leg, foot and toe stretch) Benefits – Stretches the hips, thighs, hamstrings, groins and calves. Strengthens the knees. Stimulates the prostate gland. Improves digestion. Relieves backache, sciatica, and menstrual discomfort.</p> <p>Contraindications – Diarrhoea. Headache. High blood pressure: raise your head and neck on a folded blanket.</p>	
<p>Tadasana (mountain posture) Benefits: Reduces lower back pain. Strengthens knee joints. Corrects flat feet. Improves bladder control and posture. In addition to the main posture also practice Tadasana Urdhva Hastasana (stretching arms up) and Tadasana Urdhva Baddha Hastasana (Arms stretched up with fingers interlocked).</p>	
<p>Trikonasana (triangle posture) Benefits: Tones the abdominal organs. Alleviates backache. Tones the pelvic organs, correcting the effects of a sedentary lifestyle or faulty posture. Stimulates digestion. Reduces stiffness in the neck, shoulders and knees. Tones the ligaments of the arms and legs. Contraindications: If you have high blood pressure, do not look up at the raised arm.</p>	
<p>Ardha Chandrasana (half moon posture) Benefits: Tones the lumbar and sacral spine, relieving backache. Rotates and flexes the vertebral joints, keeping the spinal muscles supple. Helps relieve sciatica. Corrects misalignment of the shoulders. Improves circulation in the feet. Contraindications: Avoid this posture if you are tired. If you have high blood pressure, do not look up at the raised arm. Look straight ahead.</p>	
<p>Adho Mukha Svanasana (downward dog). Benefits: Therapeutic for high blood pressure, asthma, flat feet, sciatica, sinusitis. Energizes the body. Stretches the shoulders, hamstrings, calves, arches, and hands. Strengthens the arms and legs. Helps prevent osteoporosis. Improves digestion. Relieves headache, insomnia, back pain, and fatigue. Contraindications: -Carpal tunnel syndrome, diarrhoea, high blood pressure or headache: - support your head on a bolster or block.</p>	
<p>Prasarita Padottanasana (intense leg stretch) Benefits: Relieves lower backache. Energises the heart and lungs. Reduces blood pressure. Tones the abdominal organs. Strengthens the knee joint and makes the hip joint supple. Contraindications: if you have low blood pressure, come out of the posture slowly to avoid dizziness. If you are a beginner, do not hold this posture for longer than one minute.</p>	
<p>Paripurna Navasana (full boat posture) Benefits: Reduces lower backache by strengthening the spinal muscles. Tones the abdominal muscles and organs. Improves blood circulation in the abdomen. Stimulates the thyroid gland, increasing the body's metabolic rate. Contraindications: Avoid this posture if you have breathlessness or asthma. Beginners – place a belt around your feet to hold the posture.</p>	
<p>Bharadvajasana (torso stretch) Benefits: Relieves pain in the neck, shoulders and back. Helps to keep the spine and shoulders supple. Increases the flexibility of the back and hips. Eases a painful, stiff or fused lumbar spine. Contraindications: avoid this posture if you have diarrhoea or a stress-related headache. Always finish your yoga practice by relaxing in Savasana.</p>	