



# Karuna Yoga Newsletter

Issue no: 59

January 2013

## YOGA THERAPY LOOSEN UP YOUR JOINTS

On cold winter mornings, warming up your joints is an invigorating way to wake up and start your day. It's also good to include these joint exercises as part of your stretching routine before your yoga practice.

Most warm-up exercises emphasise major muscle groups but focusing on the joints initially can be an effective way to energise the body and ensure a safe yoga practice. It's also good for the long-term health of your joints because when you move your joints through the full range of motion, it increases circulation and lubricates the entire joint.

Repeat each movement eight times, and take slow, deep breaths as you go.

### KNEES



Sit in Dandasana with your sitting bones on a folded blanket or block. Bend your left knee in toward the chest, clasping your hands behind the thigh. Make large circles with your lower left leg, straightening the leg at the top of the circle, if you can. Repeat with the right leg.



### ELBOWS and SHOULDERS

Sit cross-legged with your fingertips on your shoulders. Rotate your elbows through the full range of motion: raise the upper arms to your ears (elbows pointing toward the ceiling), then circle forward and try to touch the elbows in front of your chest, then bring them back down to the side ribs, and finally back up to shoulder height.

### ANKLES



Sit on a folded blanket or block. Rotate both feet in unison, first clockwise and then anticlockwise. Next, take your legs about a block's distance apart and rotate your feet in opposite directions, bringing big toes to touch as they come toward each other. Finish by flexing and pointing both feet eight times.



### WRISTS

Stretch your arms out in front at shoulder level. Bend your hands backward from the wrists as if pressing your palms against a wall, fingers pointing upward. Then, fold the hands forward from the wrists so that the fingers curl in toward the chest. To finish, make your hands into fists and rotate wrists in both directions.

## NOW STRETCH YOUR MUSCLES

### SUPTA PADANGUSTHASANA

Bend your right knee onto your chest and place a belt around the ball of your foot. Slowly straighten your leg by pushing your foot toward the ceiling. Take care not to force the stretch. Allow the muscles to stretch and lengthen slowly while you take slow, deep breaths. This posture helps to stretch the hips, thighs, hamstrings, groins and calves.



RORY EARNSHAW

Then take the belt into your right hand and slowly take your leg over to the right, keeping your left hip down on the mat. Your right leg may not reach the floor so don't force it. Feel the inner thigh muscles stretching and lengthening. Place a brick under your foot to help keep your hips level.



The picture is showing the left leg but we are still working the right leg. Slowly lift your right leg back to the centre and now hold the belt with your left hand. Inhale and as you exhale take your right leg across the body over to the left. Keep both shoulder blades on the mat and don't force your leg to go too far. You may not touch the floor but this is okay. Feel the stretch on the outer leg, hip and lower back. Come back to the centre and change legs, now stretching the left leg.



### ADHO MUKHA SVANASANA

Downward Dog uses the strength of your arms and legs to fully and evenly stretch your spine. It stretches your hips, hamstrings and calves as it strengthens your quadriceps and ankles. It opens your chest and shoulders and tones your arms and abdominals. It even tones your hands and feet, preparing you for standing postures and arm balances.

Even if you don't have much time at home for a yoga practice, do Downward Dog every day just for one or two minutes. Practiced consciously, Downward Dog can train you to balance strength and flexibility in your whole body.



MARTY SCONDUTO

### Anjaneyasana (low lunge)

Finally stretch the front of your body in this low lunge. This posture stretches the deep psoas muscle helping to release any tension in your lower back. It also strengthens the legs and helps to improve your balance.

The connection between a sedentary lifestyle and lower back discomfort in yoga poses is the hip flexor muscles across the front of the hips. If the hip is constantly kept in a flexed position, like sitting, for hours every day, day after day, the hip flexors will shorten and shrink, limiting your ability to fully extend the hip. If left unstretched, shortened hip flexors affect the position of the pelvis, which in turn affects the position and movement of the lower back. This posture is excellent for stretching the hip flexors.



MARTY SCONDUTO