



# Karuna Yoga Newsletter

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## YOGA THERAPY YOGA FOR OSTEOPOROSIS (part 3)

In the newsletters for January and February I explained the meaning of osteoporosis and why yoga is an excellent solution for both osteoarthritis and osteoporosis. I also gave you information why a rounded spine can cause a wedge fracture leading to kyphosis commonly known as a dowagers hump. So ARE YOU SITTING UP STRAIGHT?!!

Remember the words of the yoga master, T. Krishnamacharya, “**We will benefit from yoga to whatever extent we do it. Asanas (postures) give us strength, and pranayama (yoga breathing) gives us health and longevity**”. Just enjoy your yoga without concern of what others are doing in the class. As you breathe in a yoga posture, feel the energy flowing through your body giving you the benefit of the asana and the breath.

### PREVENTING FRACTURES IN YOUR BONES

Fractures from falls are so detrimental to health that it is important to know how we can avoid them. You can reduce the risk of breaking a bone by working on the following:-

- **STRENGTH.** Greater muscular strength puts greater strain on the bones in almost every action. The stress stimulates the bones to create more bone tissue. Greater strength can also prevent you from falling over.
- **BALANCE.** People with better balance have fewer falls. A simple fact but an important one to remember. Include balancing postures in your yoga practice. Balancing in yoga improves your body's posture and focuses the mind.
- **GOOD ALIGNMENT.** The purpose of yoga is to gain control of the body and the mind. Poor alignment in the body is the second greatest cause of injuries. Yoga increases alertness in the mind and may help prevent confusion leading to fracturing falls.

### THE FOOD CONNECTION

The advice you will likely be given for building strong bones is to drink lots of milk and eat lots of cheese. Your bones need calcium, but if you consume large quantities of milk and cheese, you are actually draining your bones of this much needed mineral. I said last month that dairy products have an acidifying effect on your body.

Let me explain. Everything we put into our body gets processed and alters its acid/alkaline balance. The body tries to correct the imbalance. So because milk has an acidifying effect, your body automatically pulls calcium out of your bones to neutralise the acid attack, because calcium is a potent neutraliser. Even though milk contains 300 mg of calcium in one cup, unfortunately, the net result is a calcium deficit in your bones.

If you need an alternative to milk, I would recommend almond or rice milk. Make sure these are unsweetened.

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## POSTURES THAT FOCUS ON BONE STRENGTH

For each yoga posture below I have provided guidelines on how to do the posture if you have osteoporosis or osteopenia. You can simply practise the classic posture without variation in order to help *prevent* these conditions. Bone-forming proteins seem to synthesise quite well after 10 seconds of stimulating pressure so all yoga postures should be held a little longer than that. Try 20 to 30 seconds at first and then build up to a minute.

<p><b>JANU SIRASANA (sitting forward stretch)</b> This posture generates isometric anterior-posterior stress on the femurs (bones in the thighs) and all the lumbar and thoracic vertebrae and most of the pelvis. Avoid rounding the back and keep lengthening the dorsal spine forward towards the sternum. If you have osteoporosis or osteopenia, place a belt around the foot of the extended leg. Move gently forward bending only from the top of your leg. Keep your arms pulled back into the shoulders even though you are reaching forward. This will help to extend the spine without rounding or collapsing it.</p>	 <p>MARTIN SCONDUTO</p>
<p><b>MARICHYASANA III (spinal twist)</b> This posture applies torsion stress to the lumbar and thoracic vertebrae, the shoulder joint and the femurs. Twisting postures teach focus and calm even under pressure. The picture opposite shows the classic version. If you have osteoporosis or osteopenia, use a chair for this posture. Place your right foot on the chair, your right hand on your lower back and your left hand goes across to your right thigh. Twist to the right taking care to keep your hips level. Repeat on the other side.</p>	 <p>MARTY SCONDUTO</p>
<p><b>PASCHIMOTTANASANA (seated forward bend)</b> This posture stimulates the legs, pelvis and spine. To prepare for this posture it is important to first practise Supta Padangusthasana, as shown in the first picture. If you have osteoporosis, you may find it more beneficial to practise only the first posture. If you have osteopenia, sit on the edge of a folded blanket and use a belt around both feet. Press the muscles of your legs down to your bones and stretch out through your heels with the feet flexed. Pull on the belt to connect your arms to your shoulders. With each inhalation continue to lift the spine and move forward gently without rounding the back.</p>	 <p>RORY EARNSHAW MARTIN SCONDUTO</p>
<p><b>SAVASANA (corpse or relaxation posture)</b> It is so important to relax and consolidate the benefits of your yoga practice. Make sure you are warm and comfortable and then become settled. B.K.S. Iyengar commented in his book <i>Light on Yoga</i>, “By remaining motionless for some time and keeping the mind still while you are fully conscious, you learn to relax. This conscious relaxation invigorates and refreshes both body and mind. But it is much harder to keep the mind than the body still. Therefore, this apparently easy posture is one of the most difficult to master.”</p>	 <p>MARTIN SCONDUTO</p>