



Karuna Yoga Newsletter

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YOGA THERAPY YOGA FOR OSTEOPOROSIS (part 4)

So far in this series we have learnt why yoga is an excellent solution for both osteoarthritis and osteoporosis, how a rounded spine can cause a wedge fracture leading to kyphosis, and how to prevent fractures in your bones. In the last three newsletters I included yoga postures that focused on bone strength. This month I have included yoga postures that focus on muscle strength.

IMPORTANCE OF CORE MUSCLES

Your core muscles are involved in nearly every movement your body makes. Strong, supple core muscles allow you to achieve good balance and posture. Balance is the key in avoiding falls resulting in fracture; while correct posture helps you avoid developing a Dowager's hump - the rounded hunched upper back often associated with osteoporosis and ageing. In addition, working your core keeps your spine aligned, which decreases back pain and allows your bones to get the most benefit from weight-bearing exercises.

THE FOOD CONNECTION

I explained in the previous newsletters that an excess of acid-forming foods are damaging to our bones. You don't have to avoid all acid-forming foods and there are some tricks you can use to alkalise your favourite acidifying foods. The idea is to add the appropriate alkalising foods to acidifying ones. While the exact proportion is up to you, a rough guideline is to substitute about 1/3 of the acidifying food with an alkalising food. Remember, this won't convert the acidifying food into an alkalising food, but it will make it less acidifying.

- Mix mayonnaise with **tahini** to make it less acidifying. Use it as a dip for raw vegetables.
- Eggs are extremely nutritious, but they are acidifying, and if you add mayonnaise, you're adding more acidifying ingredients. The same is true for tuna or salmon even though they are a good source of omega 3 fatty acids. So add some **mashed avocado** to your egg or fish salads as it provides an important alkalising element.
- Almost all beans are acidifying (black, pinto, kidney, garbanzo, lentils, red, and white varieties). **Lima beans, also known as butter beans**, are an exception. Their creamy texture and subtle flavour make them a great addition to soup, stew, chilli, or any bean dish.
- To alkalise mashed potatoes, grate and sauté **cauliflower** and mix it in. You can also add mashed **sweet potato** as another way to add an alkalising element, and it gives the potatoes a delicious flavour and a lovely colour.
- Chicken soup is very popular but it's still an animal protein and therefore acidifying. To increase the nutrients and alkalinity in a chicken soup, add **carrots or pumpkin or butternut squash** into the soup.

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POSTURES THAT FOCUS ON MUSCLE 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.

VIRABHADRASANA II (warrior II)

This posture safely stimulates the femur and pelvic bones, improves balance, hip mobility, leg strength and self-assurance. Important to work on core muscles in this posture.

If you have osteoporosis or osteopenia, place a chair in front of you. Step your feet apart until your ankles are under your outstretched wrists. Hold the back of the chair for balance. When you feel steady, you can stretch your arms wide. Hold this position for about 20 seconds, breathing fully yet smoothly.



CHRIS ANDRE

PRASARITA PADOTTANASANA (wide leg standing forward bend)

This posture stretches the adductors, hamstrings, gluteus maximus and spine. It also stimulates the pelvic and leg bones. This wide-open standing posture develops stamina and self-assurance.

The picture opposite shows the classic version. Ensure your dorsal spine moves forward to your sternum and avoid rounding your back.

If you have osteoporosis or osteopenia, use a chair for this posture. Depending on the flexibility of your legs, either place your hands on the back of a chair or on the seat of a chair. Do not round your spine.



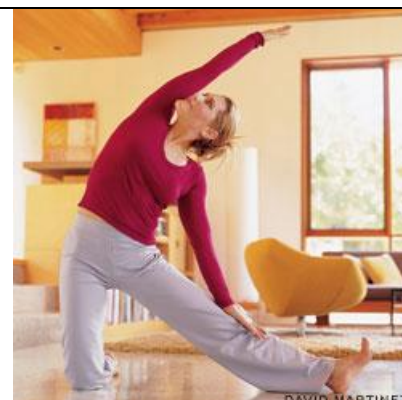
RORY EARNSHAW

PARIGHASANA (the gate)

This posture stretches the torso and the leg and stimulates the sides of the lumbar vertebrae and pelvic bones.

If you have osteopenia or osteoporosis, use a chair for this posture. Kneel on a blanket and extend your left leg out to the side placing it under the chair. Stretch up through the sides of your body and prepare to stretch over to the left.

Place your left hand or forearm on the chair seat for support. Your right hand rests on your hip. When you are ready, swing your right arm up and over to the left. Repeat on the other side.



DAVID MARTINEZ

USTRASANA (camel)

This posture stimulates the anterior and posterior vertebrae, anterior pelvis and femur. It builds upper body strength and confidence.

If you have osteoporosis, sit on the front edge of the chair. Stretch your legs out in front of you and place them hip-width apart. Place your hands on the seat of the chair and slowly lift your hips moving your knees and thighs forward. If you have osteopenia, kneel on a blanket with your back to the chair seat. As you lift your chest and squeeze your shoulder blades together, reach back and place your hands on the chair seat. Slowly bend backwards arching your middle back, upper back and chest. If you feel any pain in your lower back, you must come out the posture immediately but carefully.



CHRIS ANDRE