



# Karuna Yoga Newsletter

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## YOGA THERAPY YOGA FOR OSTEOPOROSIS (part 5)

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 previous four newsletters I included yoga postures that focused on bone strength and muscle strength. This month I will continue with postures that focus on muscle strength.

### PREVENTING FRACTURES

Tensile strength is a key factor in preventing fractures. This means the amount of stress you can put on your bones without damage. Current osteoporosis drugs – particularly bisphosphonates – actually harden bone, making it less flexible. The drugs you may be prescribed do not “cure” osteoporosis. They stop new bone from forming and leave you with brittle bones more prone to fracture. Both bone density and tensile strength can be increased with a **pH-balanced diet** and **exercises to strengthen bones and muscles**.

### STAY WELL HYDRATED

Drinking plenty of water is crucial for your bones all year round. Dehydration actually hurts your bones, because your body produces bone-destroying stress hormones in response to the lack of water. If you are chronically dehydrated, it's more than likely your bones are losing density. The reality is, if you wait until you are hot and thirsty to take a drink, you are **already dehydrated**.

### THE FOOD CONNECTION

Here are more alkalising foods to include in your diet. They also contain essential bone building nutrients:





- Asparagus – contains vitamin K1, B1, B2, folate, C and D.
- Peas – contain Vitamins K1, C, folate, B6, B1, B2, B3, manganese, magnesium, copper and zinc.
- Apricots – contain an exceptional amount of boron necessary for bone health. Boron decreases the amount of calcium and magnesium excreted in the urine and also activates vitamin D.
- Other alkalising foods are artichokes, beetroots and cherries.

### Mung Beans (Greek name is pobitsa)

Include mung beans in your diet. These beans are so easy to cook and provide many health benefits. They help to alkalise the body and they are 40% protein. They can be sprouted and used in stir-fries or salads. The whole beans can be cooked without soaking and take only half an hour to cook in water. Add the cooked beans to curries or cook them whole with brown rice. Split mung beans make an excellent soup with carrots, onions, garlic and ginger.

## 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.

<p><b>ADHO MUKHA SVANASANA (downward dog)</b> This posture stimulates the bones at the front of the thigh and also the shin bones. It strengthens the wrists, shoulder blades, lower back ribs and forearm bones. If you have <b>osteoporosis</b>, place your mat next to a wall. Stand about 30cm from the wall and place your hands on the wall with your arms shoulder-width apart. This relieves stress on the spine. If you have <b>osteopenia</b>, you can practise this posture using a chair. Hold the front outer edges of the chair seat and walk your feet back.</p>	 <p>MARTY SCONDUTO</p>
<p><b>ANANTASANA (side-lying balance)</b> This posture stimulates the sides of the spinal vertebrae, the hip bones and the femur bones at the back of the legs. It improves your balance and enhances circulation in your legs. If you have <b>osteoporosis</b>, practise this posture with your back against a wall and your top arm resting in front of you for support. Lift your top leg just a few centimetres. If you have <b>osteopenia</b>, practise against a wall but use a belt around your foot and lift your leg as high as possible, without over stretching.</p>	
<p><b>PARIPURNA NAVASANA (boat)</b> This posture stimulates the anterior lumbar vertebrae, pelvic bones and femurs. It improves strength, balance and focus. If you have <b>osteoporosis</b>, place a chair against a wall facing out. Sit down on your mat with your back a few centimetres away from the edge of the chair with your knees bent. Hold your legs behind your knees and lift your feet, touching the chair lightly with your upper back. Balance on your sitting bones. If you have <b>osteopenia</b>, try the full posture but keep your knees bent. Stretch the arms when you feel strong enough.</p>	 <p>CHRIS ANDRE</p>
<p><b>ARDHA MATSYENDRASANA (half Lord of the Fishes)</b> This posture puts a resistive load on the entire skeleton, one side at a time. Always lengthen the spine upward before rotation. Use your abdominal muscles to help you twist. If you have <b>osteoporosis</b>, place a chair with its left side 15cm from a wall. Sit facing forward on the chair and cross your left leg over your right. As you exhale turn towards the wall. Place your right hand on your left knee and your left hand on the wall. Repeat on the other side. If you have <b>osteopenia</b>, sit on your mat on a folded blanket alongside the wall with your left side to the wall. Bend your left knee and cross it over the right. Your right leg is straight. As you twist to the left, hold your left knee with your right hand and your left hand on the wall.</p>	 <p>CHRIS ANDRE</p>