



Karuna Yoga Newsletter

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YOGA THERAPY STRENGTHENING THE BACK

Core strength is critical in order to prevent injury in both sports and in the asanas we practise in yoga. A strong core also allows us to sit in cross-legged postures for meditation or pranayama. For true core strength, we need to be strong not just in the abdominal muscles or in the back but in both—and we need an appropriate balance of strength, front to back. Without strength in the muscles that support the spine, strength in the front is counterproductive.

We should be able to hold Navasana (boat) for the same number of breaths as we can hold Purvottanasana (upward plank) so that we have balance in our front-to-back core strength. If you can hold Navasana more than twice as long as Purvottanasana, you may need to focus on strengthening the back of the body. We also need flexibility in the front of the body in order to strengthen our back. The act of doing yoga helps you build the flexibility and strength you need.

Backbends counter the compression in the spine caused by sitting for long periods. They also build a strong “back core”, which lets you stand or sit up straighter with ease.

Purvottanasana – when practising Purvottanasana (upward plank) you are preparing your body for various backbends. You are stretching the front body, ankles, groins, belly, shoulders and throat, while strengthening your wrists and arms. After this posture, be sure to release your back with a few twists and an easy forward bend.

Navasana - with Navasana (boat), you’ll build strong abdominal muscles that can help support your lower back. So you’re strengthening both your abdomen and your back.

Setu Bandha - when you practise Setu Bandha (bridge), the back of the body is actively engaged strengthening your back muscles but also allowing the front of the body to soften, spread and open.






Salabhasana – when practising Salabhasana (locust) you are strengthening the muscles of the spine, buttocks, and backs of the arms and legs while stretching the shoulders, chest, belly and thighs.

Dhanurasana - when practising Dhanurasana (bow) you are stretching the entire front of the body including ankles, thighs and groins, abdomen and chest, throat and the deep hip flexors (psoas muscle) while also strengthening the back muscles.

Remember to hold the mula bandha in these postures and to allow your breath to become slower and deeper.

Contact Lynne on 00302892042356 or email lynne.gully@iremia.net

POSTURES TO STRENGTHEN YOUR CORE FRONT AND BACK

<p>PURVOTTANASANA (upward plank)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In this posture, the whole front of the body is stretched • It strengthens the arms, wrists and legs • Particularly stretches the shoulders, chest and front ankles. 	 <p>MARTIN SCODUTO</p>
<p>NAVASANA (boat)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthens the abdomen, hip flexors and spine • Stimulates the kidneys, thyroid and prostate • Improves digestion <p>It is often difficult to straighten the raised legs. Bend your knees and place a belt around the soles of your feet. Lean back and then lift and straighten your legs, keeping your back flat and your chest lifted.</p>	 <p>CHRIS ANDRE</p>
<p>SETU BANDHA (bridge)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stretches the chest, neck and spine • Stimulates abdominal organs, lungs and thyroid • Improves digestion • Strengthens the abdominal organs • Relieves backache, strengthens the spine and relieves neck strain • Therapeutic for asthma, high blood pressure, osteoporosis and sinusitis. 	 <p>DAVID MARTINEZ</p>
<p>SALABHASANA (locust)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthens the muscles of the spine, buttocks, backs of the arms and legs • Stretches the shoulders, chest, belly and thighs • Improves posture • Stimulates abdominal organs 	 <p>MARTY SCODUTO</p>
<p>DHANURASANA (bow)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stretches the entire front of the body, ankles, thighs and groins, abdomen and chest, throat and deep hip flexors (psoas) • Strengthens the back muscles • Stimulates the organs of the abdomen <p>If it isn't possible for you to hold your ankles directly, take a belt around the fronts of your ankles and hold the ends of the belt, keeping your arms fully extended. Sometimes it is difficult to lift your thighs away from the floor. You can give your legs a little upward boost by lying with your thighs supported on a rolled-up blanket.</p>	 <p>RORY EARNSHAW</p>