



Karuna Yoga Newsletter

Issue no: 86

October 2015

YOGA THERAPY SOFTEN THE KNEES

MUSCLES, BONES AND JOINTS

The human body is composed of bone and muscle. The bones that make up the skeletal frame of the body are attached to each other by joints, which are held in place by strong ligaments and muscles. A muscle contracts or relaxes to move the bones connected to it. Better muscle function means a fitter, stronger body. Practising yoga strengthens the bones and improves co-ordination of the muscles.

LOOK AFTER YOUR KNEES

It's very easy to get into the habit of locking your knees when you practise standing yoga postures. This can result in pushing the knee joint backwards and causing hyperextending knees. It also results in pushing back into the calf muscles and causing tightness in these muscles. I would highly recommend that you soften the knee joints in all standing postures and notice the difference. Softening the knees allows you to rotate your thighs outwards and so helping you to open the hips a bit more. Rotating the thighs outwards helps to strengthen the adductors (the inner thigh muscles) and also the quadriceps (the muscles on the front of the thighs).

START WITH THE FEET

If your knees drop inwards when you are standing, this is often caused by dropped arches in the feet. As you stand in Tadasana (mountain posture), start by lifting the arches of your feet but still keeping contact with the base of the big toes. Then lift your inner ankles and keep pushing outwards. This will bring your knees into correct alignment with your feet. Now push outwards with the adductor muscles (inner thighs) but keeping your knee joints soft. All standing yoga postures should start with the feet.







OSTEOARTHRITIS OF THE KNEES

A decrease in the synovial fluid that lubricates the knee joint leads to this condition. The cartilage in the area become rough and tends to flake off. The knee joint loses flexibility and the ability to stretch and bend. Developing osteoarthritis is not an inevitable part of aging. You can do something to help your joints.

- Are you dehydrated as stiffness in the joints is a sign of dehydration?
- Consider taking glucosamine hydrochloride. This is better absorbed than glucosamine sulphate. Studies have shown that glucosamine can stop and even reverse joint degeneration as it helps to rebuild cartilage.
- Reduce your dairy consumption. Cows' milk has a high ratio of phosphorus to calcium and this can cause bone problems including osteoporosis. Good sources of calcium include nuts (almonds, Brazils), seeds (sesame, sunflower, pumpkin), pulses such as haricot beans, vegetables (spinach, cabbage, kale, carrots), and fruits (apricots and figs).
- Consider taking vitamin D3. It contributes to the maintenance of normal bones, muscle function, boosts the immune system and allows the normal absorption and utilisation of calcium and phosphorus.

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SOFTEN THE KNEES AND STRENGTHEN TO ALLEVIATE PAIN

<p>ADHO MUKHA SVANASANA (downward dog).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hands on the mat with your fingers spread apart. • Curl your toes under and lift your knees but keep your knees bent. • Press into your hands and push back into your sitting bones. Feel your spine stretching. • Keep your knees soft as you take your heels towards the mat. Avoid pressing back into your knees and calf muscles. <p>Counters the damage to the cartilage of the knee caused by jogging and other sports.</p>	 <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">MARTY SCONDUTO</p>
<p>TRIKONASANA (triangle)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stand with your right foot out and your left foot turned in. Align the front heel with the inner arch of the back foot. • Stretch over to the right and put your right hand on your right leg. Keep your knees soft as you rotate your thighs outwards. <p>Stretches and strengthens the thighs, knees and ankles.</p>	 <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">RORY EARNSHAW</p>
<p>ARDHA CHANDRASANA (half-moon)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move into this posture from Trikonasana. • Keep the front knee soft as you lift the back leg. • Rotate both thighs outwards and keep the back leg parallel to the floor. <p>Strengthens the muscles of the legs and the knees.</p>	 <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">MARTY SCONDUTO</p>
<p>VIRASANA (hero)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kneel on mat and move the calf muscles outwards. • Sit on the floor between your feet or on a block(s). • Keep the sacrum moving down away from L5 and so avoid moving into a backbend. <p>Alleviates pain or inflammation in the knees and tones knee cartilage.</p>	 <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">DAVID MARTINEZ</p>
<p>UPAVISTA KONASANA (seated wide-angle)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sit in Dandasana with support under your buttocks. • Spread your legs out wide as far as possible. • Take your hands behind your back and press your fingertips into the support. • Rotate your thighs so that your kneecaps face the ceiling. • Bend forward using belts around your feet for support. <p>Stretches the insides and backs of your legs helping to relieve pain in your knees.</p>	 <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">RORY EARNSHAW</p>
<p>BADDHAKONASANA (fixed-angle)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sit in Dandasana with support under your buttocks. • Bend your knees and bring the soles of your feet together. • Place supports under your knees if your hips are stiff. • Take your hands behind your back and press your fingertips into the support. Then hold your feet when you're ready. • Open your chest but do not concave the lower spine. <p>Strengthens the cartilage of the knees and relieves pain in the knees.</p>	 <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">MARTY SCONDUTO</p>