



# Karuna Yoga Newsletter

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## YOGA THERAPY

### THE KNEES

As a yoga teacher I see many students with various knee problems. This can be caused by physical imbalances in our feet, ankles, shins, knees, thighs and hips. Problems can be caused by falling on the knees and some people experience pain in the knees due to inflammation.

#### **Hyperextended Knee Joints**

This is where the knee hits back and the legs sink into the back of the knee joints. The knees have a feeling of being locked. The back of the leg is longer than the front of the leg and the front thighs lack muscular support. The calf area of the leg slopes backward and there is no longer a straight line from the ankle to the hip and this prevents the flow of energy through the leg. It is very helpful to “soften” the knees in all standing yoga postures if you have this condition. This will restore the straight line from the ankle to the hip. Softening the knees also allows you to rotate the thighs outwards in most standing postures. If the knee is locked, you’ll find it difficult to do this.

#### **Knock Knees**

This is where the knees drop inward. The inner leg is longer than the outer leg. This puts pressure on the inner part of the knees and often causes problems with the meniscus in the knee. The **meniscus** is a piece of cartilage that provides a cushion between your thighbone (femur) and shinbone (tibia). There are two **menisci** in each knee joint. They can be damaged or torn during activities that put pressure on the knee joint. In yoga practice the knee must be set just right. You can strain ligaments from doing yoga postures incorrectly. It is always important to practice standing postures with careful attention to the alignment of your feet and knees. Practice standing yoga postures to strengthen around the knees. Focus particularly on the lunge positions where the knee is bent and directly aligned over the ankle. The postures Parsvakonasana and Virabhadrasana II reinforce the tendon, ligament, and cartilage around the knee.

#### **Bowed Legs**










From the centre line of the body, the legs curve out and the knees turn in. The outer legs are longer than the inner legs. The arches and ankles are collapsed. Having bowed knees does not cause problems with the menisci in the same way as having knock knees. To improve the correct alignment of your legs, develop a yoga practice of standing postures that will strengthen the structures around your knees.

Because it is a shallow joint, the knee relies on strong ligaments and muscles to hold it together. The knee joint needs to be moved through its range of motion regularly to keep it healthy. Disuse often causes the cartilage, then the bone underneath it, to deteriorate.

Iyengar yoga helps to alleviate knee problems, such as inflammation and pain from tendon, ligament and meniscus tears.

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## POSTURES TO STRENGTHEN THE STRUCTURES AROUND THE KNEES

<p><b>.SUPTA PADANGUSTHASANA</b>          Practise this posture with the lower foot pressed into the wall to ensure the leg stays in the correct alignment. The lower leg should not rotate outwards.          The upper leg should stay in correct alignment above the hip.</p>	 <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">RORY EARNBROW</p>
<p><b>ANANTASANA (side leg lift)</b>          Start by lying sideways and pressing both feet onto the wall. Align the ankles, knees, hips, waist and shoulders. Stretch out the lower arm and lift the head and bend the elbow to place the hand above the ear to support the head. Raise the upper leg either holding the big toe or using a belt.</p>	
<p><b>DANDASANA (staff)</b>          Practise with your feet pressing into the wall. If your hips or hamstrings are tight, sit on a bolster and use blocks for your hands. Press your feet onto the wall to extend the knees and knee ligaments as much as possible.</p>	
<p><b>ANJANEYASANA (low lunge)</b>          Practise this posture to get the correct position of the knee directly above the ankle. The postures with bent knees will help to eliminate excess fluid in the knee and create mobility for knee flexion, extension and rotation.</p>	 <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">MARTY SCONDUTO</p>
<p><b>VIRABHADRASANA II (warrior II)</b>          This posture builds up strength and flexibility in the legs and knee joints. Bend the front knee slowly ensuring you maintain correct alignment. Your knee should be above your ankle and maintain a straight line from your hip to your knee.</p>	 <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">CHRIS ANDRE</p>
<p><b>PARSVAKONASANA (extended side angle)</b>          If you have weak knees you can place the front foot on blocks next to a wall. Elevating the forward foot lessens the weight on the bent knee. Keep the alignment from ankle to knee and avoid letting the knee drop inwards.</p>	 <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">RORY EARNBROW</p>
<p><b>ADHO MUKHA SVANASANA (downward dog)</b>          Practise this posture with your heels pressing into the wall. Press the heels back and down to work the legs and further straighten the knees. Or place a blanket under your heels and press down onto the blanket. Keep your legs in good alignment.</p>	 <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">MARTY SCONDUTO</p>
<p><b>VAJRASANA (diamond)</b>          This posture will prepare you for Virasana. You sit with your feet under the buttocks. Start with your toes turned under and hold for ten seconds. Then move onto the tops of your feet. This posture helps to stretch out the quadriceps to normal length and restore full range of motion to the knees.</p>	
<p><b>VIRASANA (hero)</b>          Virasana helps the knees by bringing them through their complete range of flexion, nourishing joint surfaces that might otherwise be neglected. You should point your feet backward in the same line as the shins when practicing Virasana to avoid twisting your knees. In this posture we sit between our feet but use supports if needed.</p>	 <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">RICHARD CANNING</p>