



# Karuna Yoga Newsletter

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## YOGA THERAPY BACK TO BASICS FOR A NEW SEASON

### **BODY BALANCE**

In last month's newsletter I wrote about effective ways of stretching the hamstrings and calf muscles. It is, of course, also important to balance the stretching between the fronts and backs of your legs. If you have tight, short quadriceps on the front of your thighs, make sure you stretch them just as often as you stretch your hamstrings. You can stretch the quadriceps most effectively if you work on one side at a time because the muscle is tough and potentially strong. When you try to stretch the left and right together the muscles may overpower the stretch and cause your back to overarch.

### **SUPTA VIRASANA**

We don't want to let tight quadriceps prevent us from doing one of yoga's most relaxing postures.

Supta Virasana (reclining Hero Posture) is a passive backbend and a wonderful chest opener that's extremely relaxing and restorative. It's the perfect posture as long as your knees and lower back aren't in pain.

If you feel pain, it's likely that it has to do with the length in the muscles of your front body. As you come into the posture, it stretches the fronts of your ankles and lower legs. As you lie back, your quadriceps and abdominal muscles lengthen and open. Extending your arms overhead adds a shoulder and chest stretch. It's a wonderful position for spacious, relaxed breathing.








### **PROBLEMS**

If you experience difficulties coming into this posture, it's often tightness in the quadriceps preventing the muscles from lengthening enough to allow the knees and hips their full range of motion. Often the muscle is too short and hasn't been stretched enough. Perhaps it's been worked hard or you've spent long periods sitting in a chair with hips and knees both at 90-degree angles.

### **SOLUTION**

It's important to stretch the quadriceps in other postures before attempting Supta Virasana. We'll build up slowly from postures such as Anjaneyasana and Setu Bandha Sarvangasana. We'll keep the balance between stretching both the hamstrings and the quadriceps. Over time, as the quadriceps stretch and lengthen, you can try supported Supta Virasana using blocks and blankets. Eventually you will achieve the full posture.

## STRETCHING THE QUADRICEPS

<p><b>ANJANEYASANA (low lunge)</b>  <b>Stretches and lengthens:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Thighs (quadriceps)</b></li> <li>• <b>Groins</b></li> <li>• <b>Abdomen</b></li> <li>• <b>Chest</b></li> <li>• <b>Shoulders and armpits</b></li> </ul>	 <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">MARTY SCODUTO</p>
<p><b>BHUJANGASANA (cobra)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Stretches the chest and lungs, shoulders and abdomen</b></li> <li>• <b>Strengthens the spine</b></li> <li>• <b>Opens the heart and lungs</b></li> <li>• <b>Soothes sciatica</b></li> </ul>	 <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">MARTIN SCODUTO</p>
<p><b>ARDHA BHEKASANA (half frog)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Stretches the entire front of the body, ankles, thighs and groins, abdomen and chest, and deep hip flexors (psoas muscle)</b></li> <li>• <b>Strengthens the back muscles</b></li> </ul> <p>To start press your foot toward the buttock; after a while, if you have the flexibility, take the foot slightly off to the side and press it toward the floor. Be sure to keep your knee in line with your hip. Don't push your foot too hard if it hurts your knee.</p>	 <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">DAVID MARTINEZ</p>
<p><b>SETU BANDHA SARVANGASANA (bridge)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Stretches the chest, neck, spine and thighs</b></li> <li>• <b>Stimulates abdominal organs, lungs and thyroid</b></li> <li>• <b>Improves digestion</b></li> </ul>	 <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">DAVID MARTINEZ</p>
<p><b>NATARAJASANA (lord of the dance)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Stretches the shoulders and chest</b></li> <li>• <b>Stretches the thighs, groins and abdomen</b></li> <li>• <b>Lengthens the legs and ankles</b></li> </ul>	 <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">CHRIE ANDRE</p>
<p><b>VIRASANA (hero)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Stretches the thighs, knees and ankles</b></li> <li>• <b>Strengthens the arches of the feet</b></li> </ul> <p>Sit on a support such as blocks or a blanket if needed.</p>	 <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">DAVID MARTINEZ</p>
<p><b>SUPTA VIRASANA (reclining hero)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Stretches the abdomen, thighs and deep hip flexors (psoas)</b></li> <li>• <b>Stretches the knees and ankles</b></li> <li>• <b>Strengthens the arches of the feet</b></li> </ul>	 <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">KATRINE NALEO</p>