

15-Minute Yoga Workouts

Besides building strength and increasing flexibility, yoga helps you focus and relax your mind. Exercises by Cyndi Lee, founder of Om Yoga, in New York City, and lead instructor in the new DVD *Om Yoga & Meditation Workshop* (\$25, www.amazon.com).

The Program

Warm-up

Sit cross-legged on the floor, back straight and hands relaxed in your lap. Close your eyes and breathe deeply and evenly through your nose for two minutes. Slowly bend your torso from side to side for 15 breaths, exhaling to each side.

Workout

Try to make the movements flow from one to the next. Hold each position (the how-to's are on the following pages) for three breaths unless instructed otherwise. From the cross-legged warm-up pose, move into [cow pose](#) on an exhale. Inhaling, switch to cat pose. Alternate between cow and [cat poses](#) for 15 breaths. Press up into [downward dog](#). Lower knees to floor, then push back up. Repeat five times. Step your right foot forward between your hands into a classic lunge, with your bent right knee directly over your right foot, your left foot straight behind you, both feet pointing forward, and fingertips on the floor. Move into [extended side angle](#). Do a lunge and an extended side angle on your left side. Lie facedown for the [locust pose](#). Turn over to lie flat on your back. Close your eyes and breathe deeply for two minutes.

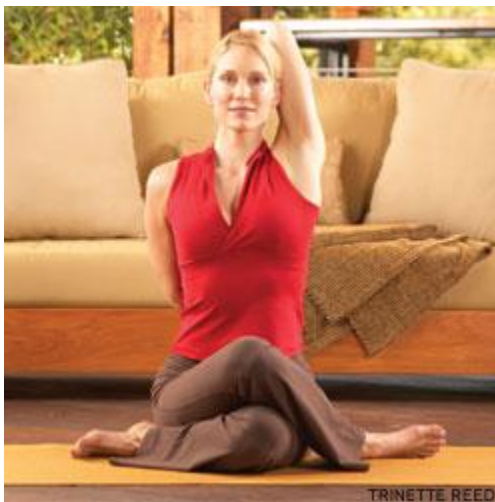
Yoga Workout: Cow and Cat Poses

What They Do: Warm up the muscles along the spine; stretch the hips, back, abs, shoulders, and neck.

How to Do Them: Start on your hands and knees. For cow (shown), arch your back and press your shoulders down and back, away from your ears, and open your chest. For cat, round your back, lower your head, lift your belly, and look at your thighs. Try to create space between your shoulder blades.

Cow Face Pose

Gomukhasana



(*go-moo-KAHS-anna*)

go = cow (Sanskrit *go* is a distant relative of the English word "cow")
mukha = face

Step by Step

- 1 Sit in Dandasana (Staff Pose), then bend your knees and put your feet on the floor. Slide your left foot under the right knee to the outside of the right hip. Then cross your right leg over the left, stacking the right knee on top of the left, and bring the right foot to the outside of the left hip. Try to bring the heels equidistant from the hips: with the right leg on top you'll have to tug the right heel in closer to the left hip. Sit evenly on the sitting bones.
- 2 Inhale and stretch your right arm straight out to the right, parallel to the floor. Rotate your arm inwardly; the thumb will turn first toward the floor, then point toward the wall behind you, with the palm facing the ceiling. This movement will roll your right shoulder slightly up and forward, and round your upper back. With a full exhalation, sweep the arm behind your torso and tuck the forearm in the hollow of your lower back, parallel to your waist, with the right elbow against the right side of your torso. Roll the shoulder back and down, then work the forearm up your back until it is parallel to your spine. The back of your hand will be between your shoulder blades. See that your right elbow doesn't slip away from the right side of your torso.
- 3 Now inhale and stretch your left arm straight forward, pointing toward the opposite wall, parallel to the floor. Turn the palm up and, with another inhalation, stretch the arm straight up toward the ceiling, palm turned back. Lift actively through your left arm, then with an exhalation, bend the elbow and reach down for the right hand. If possible, hook the right and left fingers.
- 4 Lift the left elbow toward the ceiling and, from the back armpit, descend the right elbow toward the floor. Firm your shoulder blades against your back ribs and lift your chest. Try to keep the left arm right beside the left side of your head.
- 5 Stay in this pose about 1 minute. Release the arms, uncross the legs, and repeat with the arms and legs reversed for the same length of time. Remember that whichever leg is on top, the same-side arm is lower.

Anatomical Focus

- Ankles
- Hips
- Thighs
- Shoulders
- Chest

Benefits

- Stretches the ankles, hips and thighs, shoulders, armpits and triceps, and chest

Contraindications and Cautions

- Serious neck or shoulder problems

Beginner's Tip

Beginners often have a difficult time getting both sitting bones to rest evenly on the floor, which can make it difficult for the knees to stack on top of each other evenly. When the pelvis is tilted, the spine can't properly extend. Use a folded blanket or bolster to lift the sitting bones off the floor and support them evenly.

Variations

From the full pose, lean forward and lay the front torso down on the inner top thigh. Stay for 20 seconds, then inhale and come up.

Modifications and Props

Gomukhasana is a notoriously difficult pose for tight-shouldered people, who aren't able to hook their fingers together. The simple solution to this dilemma is to hold a strap between the hands. Begin the pose with a strap draped over the shoulder of the bottom arm. In step 2, as you swing the bottom arm behind your back, slide the forearm as high on the back torso as possible (Remember to keep the elbow close to your side), then grab the bottom end of the strap. In step 3, stretch the other arm overhead and then reach down the back for the other end of the strap. Pull with the top arm. See if you can draw the bottom arm higher onto the back. You're trying to work the hands toward each other and eventually clasp them. Be aware too that you may be able to clasp the hands on one side, but not the other.

Partnering

A partner can help you increase the stretch in the back of the top arm. Have her stand behind you as you perform the pose (in this example the left arm is high). She should take her left hand on the back of your upper left arm and gently pull it back and up, as she presses her right hand forward against your left shoulder blade.

Preparatory Poses

- Baddha Konasana
- Supta Virasana
- Supta Baddha Konasana
- Supta Padangusthasana
- Upavistha Konasana
- Virasana

Follow-Up Poses

- Ardha Matsyendrasana
- Bharadvajasana
- Garudasana

- Marichyasana III
- Padmasana
- Paschimottanasana
- Upavistha Konasana

Deepen The Pose

You can increase the stretch in this pose if you're a little more flexible in the shoulders and armpits by moving your hands away from the back of your torso.

<http://www.yogajournal.com/poses/689>

Cat Pose (Bidalasana)

The Cat Yoga Pose teaches you to initiate movement from your center and to coordinate your movement and breath. These are two of the most important themes in [Asana](#) practice. The alignment of your center depends on the positioning of your pelvis. Therefore, think of your hip positioning as the center of each pose. This is important because your spine is the most significant line of energy in every pose and because the way your spine elongates from your center depends solely on which way your pelvis is turning. Learn how to perform the Cat Pose in this section.



STEP 1: Start on your hands and knees. Position your hands directly beneath your shoulders and your knees directly beneath the hips. Have your fingers fully spread with the middle fingers pointing straight ahead. Make your back horizontal and flat. Gaze at the floor. This is your "neutral" positioning. When your pelvis is in neutral, your spine will be at full extension, with both the front and back sides equally long.



STEP 2: As you wait for the inner cue, do not sag into your shoulders. Instead, create a line of energy through each arm by pressing downward into your hands and lifting upward out of your shoulders. Go back and forth like this several times to make sure you understand the movement. As you exhale, sag into your shoulders and do the incorrect action; as you inhale, lengthen the arms, lift out of the shoulders and do the correct action.



STEP 3: When you are ready to begin, breathe in deeply. As you exhale, turn your hips into **Cat Tilt**. Do this by gently pulling the abdominal muscles backward toward the spine, tucking the tailbone (coccyx) down and under, and gently contracting the buttocks. Press firmly downward with your hands in order to stay lifted out of the shoulders, and press the middle of your back toward the ceiling, rounding your spine upward. Curl your head inward. Gaze at the floor between your knees.



Yoga Workout: Downward Dog

What It Does: Strengthens the arms and legs; stretches and energizes the shoulders, thighs, feet, and hands.

How to Do It: Starting from cat pose, press your buttocks high into the air to form an upside-down V. Contract your thighs and lengthen your abs. Press your shoulder blades together and away from your ears; reach your heels toward the floor.



Yoga Workout: Extended Side Angle

What It Does: Strengthens and stretches the legs, knees, and ankles; stretches the inner thighs, back, hips, chest, and shoulders.

How to Do It: Start with your right leg forward in a lunge. Lower your left heel and turn your toes out about 45 degrees. Lower your right forearm to your knee. Reach overhead with your left hand, creating a straight line from heel to fingertips.

What It Does: stretches the shoulders,

How to Do It: Lie legs down, inhale, and lift breaths, then lower and take two full breaths. time and take two breaths.



Yoga Workout: Locust Pose

Strengthens the back, buttocks, arms, and legs; chest, abs, and thighs.

facedown, arms at sides, feet pointed. Press your head, shoulders, and arms. Take two full everything. With your forehead down, lift both legs Lower. Lift your upper and lower body at the same

Preparatory Poses:

Baddha Konasana



(BAH-dah cone-AHS-anna)

baddha = bound

kona = angle

Step by Step

1

- Sit with your legs straight out in front of you, raising your pelvis on a blanket if your hips or groins are tight. Exhale, bend your knees, pull your heels toward your pelvis, then drop your knees out to the sides and press the soles of your feet together.

2

- Bring your heels as close to your pelvis as you comfortably can. With the first and second finger and thumb, grasp the big toe of each foot. Always keep the outer edges of the feet firmly on the floor. If it isn't possible to hold the toes, clasp each hand around the same-side ankle or shin.

3

- Sit so that the pubis in front and the tailbone in back are equidistant from the floor. The perineum then will be approximately parallel to the floor and the pelvis in a neutral position. Firm the sacrum and shoulder blades against the back and lengthen the front torso through the top of the sternum.

4

- Never force your knees down. Instead release the heads of the thigh bones toward the floor. When this action leads, the knees follow.

5

- Stay in this pose anywhere from 1 to 5 minutes. Then inhale, lift your knees away from the floor, and extend the legs back to their original position.

Anatomical Focus

- Thighs

Therapeutic Applications

- Sciatica

Benefits

- Stimulates abdominal organs, ovaries and prostate gland, bladder, and kidneys
- Stimulates the heart and improves general circulation
- Stretches the inner thighs, groins, and knees
- Helps relieve mild depression, anxiety, and fatigue
- Soothes menstrual discomfort and sciatica
- Helps relieve the symptoms of menopause
- Therapeutic for flat feet, high blood pressure, infertility, and asthma
- Consistent practice of this pose until late into pregnancy is said to help ease childbirth.
- Traditional texts say that Baddha Konasana destroys disease and gets rid of fatigue.

Contraindications and Cautions

- Groin or knee injury: Only perform this pose with blanket support under the outer thighs.

Beginner's Tip

It can be difficult to lower the knees toward the floor. If your knees are very high and your back rounded, be sure to sit on a high support, even as high as a foot off the floor.

Variations

Exhale and lean your torso forward between the knees. Remember to come forward from the hip joints, not the waist. Bend your elbows and push them against the inner thighs or calves (but never on the knees). If your head doesn't rest comfortably on the floor, support it on a block or the front edge of a chair seat.

Modifications and Props

To understand the release of the heads of the thigh bones, fold two blankets and put one under each outer thigh, supporting the thighs an inch or so above their maximum stretch. Then lay a 10-pound sand bag on each inner groin, parallel to the crease between the thigh and pelvis. Release the thigh heads away from the weight, and let them sink into the blankets. Do not use the bags unless the thighs are supported.

Partnering

A partner can help you learn how to work the inner thighs in this pose. Perform Baddha Konasana. Loop a strap over each groin, with the free ends of the straps leading away from your back torso. Have your partner sit behind you and pull on the straps (perpendicular to the line of the thighs). Your partner can also press one foot lightly against the back of your pelvis at the same time. Lean slightly forward, releasing the heads of the thigh bones away from the straps.

Preparatory Poses

- Supta Padangusthasana
- Virasana

- Vrksasana

Follow-Up Poses

Standing poses and most seated twists and forward bends.

Deepen The Pose

Imagine you have two partners, each pressing inward (toward the pelvis) on a knee. From the middle of your sacrum, push out along the outer thighs against this imaginary resistance. Then push the heels firmly together from the knees.

<http://www.yogajournal.com/poses/486>

Supta Padangusthasana



(soup-TAH pod-ang-goosh-TAHS-anna)

supta = lying down, reclining

pada = foot

angusta = big toe

Step by Step

- 1** Lie supine on the floor, legs strongly extended. If your head doesn't rest comfortably on the floor, support it on a folded blanket. Exhale, bend the left knee, and draw the thigh into your torso. Hug the thigh to your belly. Press the front of the right thigh heavily to the floor, and push actively through the right heel.
- 2** Loop a strap around the arch of the left foot and hold the strap in both hands. Inhale and straighten the knee, pressing the left heel up toward the ceiling. Walk your hands up the strap until the elbows are fully extended. Broaden the shoulder blades across your back. Keeping the hands as high on the strap as possible, press the shoulder blades lightly into the floor. Widen the collarbones away from the sternum.
- 3** Extend up first through the back of the left heel, and once the back of the leg between the heel and sitting bone is fully lengthened, lift through the ball of the big toe. Begin with the raised leg perpendicular to the floor. Release the head of the thigh bone more deeply into the pelvis and, as you do, draw the foot a little closer to your head, increasing the stretch on the back of the leg.
- 4** You can stay here in this stretch, or turn the leg outward from the hip joint, so the knee and toes look to the left. Pinning the top of the right thigh to the floor, exhale and swing the left leg out to the left and hold it a few inches off the floor. Continue rotating the leg. As you feel the outer thigh move away from the left side of the torso, try to bring the left foot in line with the left shoulder joint. Inhale to bring the leg back to vertical. Lighten your grip on the strap as you do, so that you challenge the muscles of the inner thigh and hip to do the work.
- 5** Hold the vertical position of the leg anywhere from 1 to 3 minutes, and the side position for an equal length of time. Once you have returned to vertical release the strap, hold the leg in place for 30 seconds or so, then slowly release as you exhale. Repeat on the right for the same length of time.

Anatomical Focus

--->

Therapeutic Applications

--->

Benefits

- Stretches hips, thighs, hamstrings, groins, and calves
- Strengthens the knees
- Stimulates the prostate gland
- Improves digestion
- Relieves backache, sciatica, and menstrual discomfort
- Therapeutic for high blood pressure, flat feet, and infertility

Contraindications and Cautions

- Diarrhea
- Headache
- High blood pressure: Raise your head and neck on a folded blanket.

Beginner's Tip

If you are especially stiff, do this pose with the bottom-leg heel pressed against a wall. It's also useful to position a block just outside the raised-leg hip. Then when you swing the leg to the side, rest it on the block. The support under the thigh will help you soften the inner groin.

Variations

In addition to swinging the raised leg to the side, you can also cross it in front of your torso. If the left leg is raised, hold the strap in the right hand, and on an exhalation cross the raised leg to the right side. Inhale to bring the leg back to perpendicular and repeat on the other side.

Modifications and Props

You can make this pose slightly easier by raising the lower-leg heel off the floor a few inches on a block or thick book.

Partnering

A partner can help you learn how to ground the leg that stays on the floor. Lay a folded blanket on your top thigh and have your partner sit lightly on it. As you extend the leg vertically, release the thigh away from your partner's weight. Do the same as you swing the leg to the side and then return it to vertical.

Preparatory Poses

- Adho Mukha Svanasana
- Baddha Konasana
- Uttanasana

Follow-Up Poses

- Standing poses

- Seated forward bends

Deepen The Pose

If you have the flexibility, you can grip the big toe of the raised leg instead of using a strap. From the starting position, exhale and bend the raised leg thigh into your torso. Use the index and middle fingers and the thumb to grip the big toe. Be sure to reach the arm inside the thigh when you take the toe. Then perform the pose as described above.

<http://www.yogajournal.com/poses/483>

Virasana



(*veer-AHS-anna*)

vira = man, hero, chief

Step by Step

- ❶ Kneel on the floor (on a folded blanket to pad your knees, shins, and feet if necessary), with your thighs perpendicular to the floor, and touch your inner knees together. Slide your feet apart, slightly wider than your hips, with the tops of the feet flat on the floor. Angle your big toes slightly in toward each other and press the top of each foot evenly on the floor.
- ❷ Exhale and sit back halfway, with your torso leaning slightly forward. Wedge your thumbs into the backs of your knees and draw the skin and flesh of the calf muscles toward the heels. Then sit down between your feet.
- ❸ If your buttocks don't comfortably rest on the floor, raise them on a block or thick book placed between the feet. Make sure both sitting bones are evenly supported. Allow a thumb's-width space between the inner heels and the outer hips. Turn your thighs inward and press the heads of the thigh bones into the floor with the bases of your palms. Then lay your hands in your lap, one on the other, palms up, or on your thighs, palms down.
- ❹ Firm your shoulder blades against the back ribs and lift the top of your sternum like a proud warrior. Widen the collarbones and release the shoulder blades away from the ears. Lengthen the tailbone into the floor to anchor the back torso.
- ❺ At first stay in this pose from 30 seconds to 1 minute. Gradually extend your stay up to 5 minutes. To come out, press your hands against the floor and lift your buttocks up, slightly higher than the heels. Cross your ankles underneath your buttocks, sit back over the feet and onto the floor, then stretch your legs out in front of you. It may feel good to bounce your knees up and down a few times on the floor.

Anatomical Focus

- Upper back

Therapeutic Applications

- High blood pressure

Benefits

- Stretches the thighs, knees, and ankles
- Strengthens the arches
- Improves digestion and relieves gas
- Helps relieve the symptoms of menopause
- Reduces swelling of the legs during pregnancy (through second trimester)
- Therapeutic for high blood pressure and asthma

Contraindications and Cautions

- Heart problems
- Headache: Practice this pose lying back on a bolster.
- Knee or ankle injury: Avoid this pose unless you have the assistance of an experienced instructor.

Beginner's Tip

Often the inner top feet press more heavily into the floor than the outer top feet. Press the bases of your palms along the outer edges of the feet and gently push the pinky-toe sides of the feet to the floor.

Variations

Clasp your hands, extend your arms forward (perpendicular to your torso and parallel to the floor), turn the palms away from your torso (so the thumbs point to the floor), then raise the arms on an inhalation perpendicular to the floor, with the palms facing the ceiling. Stretch actively through the bases of the index fingers.

Modifications and Props

If your ankles are painful in this pose, roll up a towel and place it underneath them before you sit back.

Partnering

A partner can help you learn to lengthen the spine in this pose. Perform Virasana. Have your partner sit behind you and firmly grasp the base of your skull with the thumb and index finger of one hand. As you lengthen the tailbone into the floor, have your partner tug up on the skull base, lengthening the back spine between its two "poles." Release the crease of your neck into this space between the base of the skull and the back of the neck.

Preparatory Poses

- Balasana
- Baddha Konasana

Follow-Up Poses

- Padmasana
- Bakasana

Inversions, backbends, and standing poses

Deepen The Pose

Cup your hands around the knees, straighten the arms fully, and pull on the knees. Firm your shoulder blades against your back, lift the top sternum, and release your chin down onto the chest without straining the back of your neck. Hold for 10 to 20 seconds. Then let go of the knees and raise your head back to neutral without losing the lift of the sternum.

<http://www.yogajournal.com/poses/490>

Follow-up Poses:

Ardha Matsyendrasana



(*ARE-dah MOT-see-en-DRAHS-anna*)

ardha = half

Matsyendra = king of the fish (*matsya* = fish

indra = ruler), a legendary teacher of yoga

Step by Step

- 1** Sit on the floor with your legs straight out in front of you, buttocks supported on a folded blanket. Bend your knees, put your feet on the floor, then slide your left foot under your right leg to the outside of your right hip. Lay the outside of the left leg on the floor. Step the right foot over the left leg and stand it on the floor outside your left hip. The right knee will point directly up at the ceiling.
- 2** Exhale and twist toward the inside of the right thigh. Press the right hand against the floor just behind your right buttock, and set your left upper arm on the outside of your right thigh near the knee. Pull your front torso and inner right thigh snugly together.
- 3** Press the inner right foot very actively into the floor, release the right groin, and lengthen the front torso. Lean the upper torso back slightly, against the shoulder blades, and continue to lengthen the tailbone into the floor.
- 4** You can turn your head in one of two directions: Continue the twist of the torso by turning it to the right; or counter the twist of the torso by turning it left and looking over the left shoulder at the right foot.
- 5** With every inhalation lift a little more through the sternum, pushing the fingers against the floor to help. Twist a little more with every exhalation. Be sure to distribute the twist evenly throughout the entire length of the spine; don't concentrate it in the lower back. Stay for 30 seconds to 1 minute, then release with an exhalation, return to the starting position, and repeat to the left for the same length of time.

Anatomical Focus

- Upper back

Therapeutic Applications

- Sciatica

Benefits

- Stimulates the liver and kidneys
- Stretches the shoulders, hips, and neck
- Energizes the spine
- Stimulates the digestive fire in the belly
- Relieves menstrual discomfort, fatigue, sciatica, and backache
- Therapeutic for asthma and infertility
- Traditional texts say that Ardha Matsyendrasana increases appetite, destroys most deadly diseases, and awakens kundalini.

Contraindications and Cautions

- Back or spine injury: Perform this pose only with the supervision of an experienced teacher.

Beginner's Tip

In this version of the pose, the opposite-side arm is wrapped around the outside of the raised-leg upper thigh. This may be impractical, and potentially harmful, for beginning students. Be sure to sit up well on a blanket support and for the time being just wrap your arm around the raised leg and hug the thigh to your torso.

Modifications and Props

It's often difficult at first to get the torso snug against the inner thigh. Position yourself a foot or so away from a wall, with your back to the wall; the exact distance will depend on the length of your arms. Exhale into the twist and reach back for the wall. Your arm should be almost but not quite extended (make sure you aren't sitting too close to the wall, which will jam the shoulder). Push the wall away and move the front torso against the thigh.

Partnering

A partner can help you work the opposite-side elbow to the outside of the upper thigh. Get your legs in position as described above and turn to the right. Have your partner sit to your right side, a foot or so away, facing you. Extend your left arm toward your partner, pressing the back of your arm against the top of the right thigh. Your partner can grip your wrist and, at the same time, press his/her feet against the outside of your right thigh. Gently pushing with the feet and pulling with the hands, your partner can draw the left side of your torso out of the inner left groin while you slide the back arm further along and tuck your left side more fully against the top thigh. Remember, though, that your partner shouldn't force you into a deeper twist, but is merely helping you to lengthen and extend.

Preparatory Poses

- Baddha Konasana
- Bharadvajasana
- Janu Sirsasana
- Supta Padangusthasana

- Virasana

Follow-Up Poses

- Paschimottanasana
- Janu Sirsasana

Deepen The Pose

If you have the flexibility in the hips and spine you can bring the upper left arm to the outside of the upper right thigh. With the legs in place, exhale and turn to the right. Lean slightly back, away from the upper thigh, and bend the left elbow, pressing it against the outside of the upper right thigh. Then snuggle the torso in against the thigh and work the left upper arm further on to the outer leg until the back of the shoulder presses against the knee. Keep the elbow bent and the hand raised towards the ceiling. Lean into a slight upper-back backbend, firming the shoulder blades against the back, and lift the front torso through the top sternum.

<http://www.yogajournal.com/poses/485>

Bharadvajasana I



(bah-ROD-va-JAHS-anna), *Bharadvaja* = one of seven legendary seers, credited with composing the hymns collected in the *Vedas*

Step by Step

- 1 Sit on the floor with your legs straight out in front of you. Shift over onto your right buttock, bend your knees, and swing your legs to the left. Lay your feet on the floor outside your left hip, with the left ankle resting in the right arch.
- 2 Inhale and lift through the top of the sternum to lengthen the front torso. Then exhale and twist your torso to the right, keeping the left buttock on or very close to the floor. Lengthen your tailbone toward the floor to keep the lower back long. Soften the belly.
- 3 Tuck your left hand under your right knee and bring your right hand to the floor just beside your right buttock. Pull your left shoulder back slightly, pressing your shoulder blades firmly against your back even as you continue to twist the chest to the right.
- 4 You can turn your head in one of two directions: continue the twist of the torso by turning it to the right; or counter the twist of the torso by turning it left and looking over the left shoulder at your feet.
- 5 With every inhalation lift a little more through the sternum, using the push of the fingers on the floor to help; with every exhalation twist a little more. Stay for 30 seconds to 1 minute, then release with an exhalation, return to the starting position, and repeat to the left for the same length of time.

Anatomical Focus

- Upper back

Therapeutic Applications

- Stress

Benefits

- Stretches the spine, shoulders, and hips

- Massages the abdominal organs
- Relieves lower backache, neck pain, and sciatica
- Helps relieve stress
- Improves digestion
- Especially good in the second trimester of pregnancy for strengthening the lower back
- Therapeutic for carpal tunnel syndrome

Contraindications and Cautions

- Diarrhea
- Headache
- High blood pressure
- Insomnia
- Low blood pressure
- Menstruation

Beginner's Tip

If you tilt onto the twisting-side buttock (which compresses the lower back), raise it up on a thickly folded blanket. Consciously sink both sitting bones toward the floor.

Variations

Bharadvajasana II

Sit on the floor with your legs straight in front. Exhale and draw your left leg into Virasana (Hero Pose), then your right leg into Padmasana (Lotus Pose). (See the caution given for Padmasana.) If the right knee doesn't rest comfortably on the floor, support it with a thickly folded blanket. Twist to the right and with your left hand grip the outside of the right knee. With an expressive exhalation, swing your right arm around behind your back and grip the right foot. If it isn't possible to grip the foot directly, use a strap.

Modifications and Props

For an easier variation of this pose, sit sideways on a chair with the chair back to your right. Bring your knees together and your heels directly below your knees. Exhale and twist toward the chair back. Hold onto the sides of the chair back and lift your elbows up and out to the sides, as if you were pulling the chair back apart. Use the arms to help widen the upper back and move the twist into the space between the shoulder blades.

Partnering

A partner can help you learn to ground the opposite-side buttock. If you are twisting to the right, have your partner stand to your left side and place his/her left foot on the very top of your left thigh, with the inner edge of the foot in the groin. Apply gentle pressure at first, then increase the pressure as seems appropriate. Exhale into your twist but keep the top left thigh releasing away from your partner's foot.

Preparatory Poses

- Baddha Konasana
- Supta Padangusthasana
- Utthita Trikonasana
- Virabhadrasana II
- Virasana
- Vrksasana

Follow-Up Poses

- Baddha Konasana
- Supta Padangusthasana
- Utthita Trikonasana
- Virabhadrasana II
- Virasana
- Vrksasana
- Uttanasana
- Paschimottanasana
- Janu Sirsasana

Deepen The Pose

You can increase the challenge in this pose by slightly varying the position of the arms and hands. First, exhale and swing your right arm around behind your back as you twist to the right. If you can, grip the left arm just at the elbow with the right hand; if you can't, hold a strap looped around the left elbow. Then turn your left arm outward (so the palm faces away from the knees) and slip the hand under the right knee, palm on the floor.

<http://www.yogajournal.com/poses/487>

Meditative Pose:

Dhyana



This meditation will take anywhere from five to 20 minutes, or even longer if you wish. We recommend staying in Steps 1 and 2 for one to two minutes each; in Step 3 for three to five minutes; and in Step 4 for five to 15 minutes.

Step by Step

- 1 Get into a comfortable, seated position, either in a chair with your legs uncrossed, or on the floor. Adjust your posture so that your spine is upright, yet your body feels relaxed. Rest your hands in your lap or on your thighs, with the palms facing up or down.
- 2 Close your eyes and bring your attention to your breathing. Take a few conscious and deep abdominal breaths. Let your exhalations carry out any tension or anxiety you're feeling now, and use them throughout your meditation to expel any tension or anxiety that comes up.

If it is helpful, you may use the affirmations—"I am" on the in-breath and "calm and relaxed" on the out-breath—to center yourself during this practice.

- 3 Bring your awareness to your heart. Allow your breaths to massage this area. Notice any specific feelings or thoughts you may have about yourself, people you know, or any particular event. Cultivate a detached and nonjudgmental attitude to anything that comes up for you.
- 4 Continue to focus on the heart area while doing the following:

Cultivate a friendly and accepting attitude toward yourself and your friends.

Develop feelings of compassion and understanding for all those who suffer.

Be joyful in your thoughts about a particular person who's important to you or a saint or guru you hold in high esteem.

Maintain feelings of indifference and equanimity to anyone who has harmed you or anyone else. Don't get sucked into their mean-spiritedness or harmful deeds.

To complete your meditation, take three to five deep abdominal breaths. Open your eyes and slowly get up.

<http://www.yogajournal.com/poses/2447>