

# Choose Yoga for You

## Yoga for You

Yoga and Ayurveda are inseparable and connected to each other. Both belong to the ancient Indian tradition and comprehensively illuminate the basic laws and principles governing life on earth. Yoga, clubbed together with Ayurveda, will produce positive effects on health and wellness. The word “Yoga” comes from the Sanskrit word “YUJ” which means “to unite or integrate”.

The exercises we now call simply “yoga” are actually a part of ‘Hatha yoga’, a discipline intended to prepare the body for the pursuit of union with the divine. Through controlled breathing, prescribed postures (called **Asanas**), and meditation, Hatha yoga seeks to enhance the prana, or life force, that resides in the body and achieve a state of balance and harmony between body and mind.

Each of these three disciplines contributes to the search for union in its own unique way:

### 1. Breathing

The life force Prana is believed to enter the body through the breath, and much of Hatha yoga is concerned with helping you control your breathing properly. Shallow, hurried breathing is believed to inhibit the life force and affect mind and body adversely. Deep, slow breathing is encouraged for better health.

### 2. Postures

Some yoga postures are intended to stretch and strengthen muscles, others to improve the skeletal system, while some others aim at compressing and relaxing the organs and nerves.

### 3. Meditation

Meditation supplements and reinforces the disciplines of Hatha yoga, focusing the mind and relaxing the body. Closely linked with focused breathing, it seeks to produce a quiet, calm frame of mind. Many people find that it reduces stress and increases energy. The interplay of this and the other two facets of Hatha yoga are considered as the key for achieving yoga's benefits.

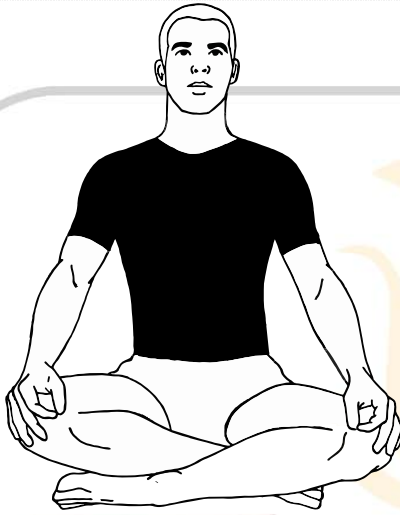
## Who can Practice Yoga?

Yoga can be practiced by anyone, at any age, with any physical condition, depending on the individual's needs. For example, **athletes and dancers** can practice yoga for the purpose of restoring energy and improving stamina. **Housewives** can focus on rejuvenating energy to reduce fatigue, executives to give a break to the overworked mind; **children** to control the wandering mind, muscle toning, to improve memory and concentration, **seniors** to feel strong, and to improve memory. Yoga breathing techniques (Pranayama) are very powerful since they work as a tonic to reduce stress, insomnia, emotional imbalance, headache etc. Yoga, therefore, is applicable for all ages from 5 years to as long as we live

## Yoga Postures: Yogasanas

These are basic Yogasanas. Best time to practice Yoga is either in the morning or in the evening. It is the best if stomach is empty prior to the practice.

**Disclaimer** - Not all exercise regimes are suitable for everyone and this / any exercise programme may result in injury if performed incorrectly. Consult an expert or a doctor before you practise this.



## 1. Sukhasana

### What is Sukhasana?

In Sanskrit, Sukha means happy or easy or comfortable. Hence, Sukhasana refers to a comfortable and easy sitting position.

### Explanation

For Sukhasana, sit in cross-legged position with your spine straight and hand resting on your knees. You can adapt this to suit your needs; by sitting on a cushion with your legs crossed; or if you have knee problems, sitting with one or both legs extended out in front of you.

### Benefit

Sukhasana opens the hips and stretches the spine. It promotes inner calm and relieves physical and mental exhaustion and tiredness. It intensifies the state of serenity, tranquility, and eliminates anxiety.

### Precaution

This asana should be avoided in case of recent or chronic knee or hip injury or inflammation.

## 2. Anuloma Viloma

### What is Anuloma Viloma?

Anuloma Viloma is a breathing technique. In Sanskrit Anuloma means with the natural order and Viloma means going against. Thus it is called an Alternate Nostril breathing technique. In this breathing Technique, you inhale through one nostril, retain the breath, and exhale through the other nostril.

Anuloma Viloma balances the rhythm of breathing and restores, equalizes the flow of Prana in the body.

### Explanation

There are six steps that form one round of Anuloma Viloma. First, raise your right hand, curling your forefinger and middle finger into your palm, leaving thumb, fourth finger, and little finger extended.

1. Place your thumb on the right side of your nose and apply



gentle pressure just under the bone, where the fleshy part of the nose begins. Inhale through the left nostril, to the count of four.

2. Hold the breath by closing both the nostrils, to the count of sixteen.

3. Then exhale through the right nostril, closing the left with the ring and little fingers, to the count of eight.

4. Inhale through the right nostril, keeping the left nostril closed with the ring and little fingers, to the count of four.

5. Hold the breath, closing both nostrils, to the count of sixteen.

6. Exhale through the left nostril, keeping the right closed with the thumb, to the count of eight.

Initially practice three rounds and gradually reach up to twenty rounds.

### **Benefit**

Anuloma Viloma helps to balance and harmonize the functioning of the right and left hemispheres of the brain and ensures optimum creativity and optimum logical verbal activity. It is the best technique to soothe the nervous system and calms the mind. It encourages the removal of stale air and toxins as the exhalations are longer than inhalation in this technique.

### **3. *Setu Bandha Sarvangasana***

#### **What is Setu Bandha Sarvangasana?**

In Sanskrit, Setu means bridge, Bandha means energy-binder that directs subtle energy flow and sarvanga means whole body (balanced on shoulders and neck). Thus literally, Setu Bandha Sarvangasana means a bridge that flows the energy into body. Also known as the Little Bridge or bridge pose, this asana calms the brain and rejuvenates tired legs.

#### **Explanation**

Start by lying on your back, with your knees bent and the soles of your feet on the ground. Keep your feet apart and parallel. Bring your heels in as close to your hips as you can. Rest your arms at your sides with the palms of your hands facing downwards. Inhaling, press down on your feet and start by



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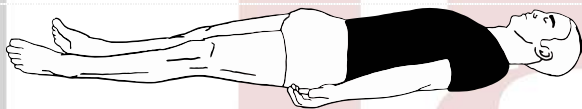
pressing your navel toward the ground as you begin to raise your hips upward. Then gradually allow the middle and upper sections of your spine to rise. Raise your spine off the ground until the thighs are about parallel to the floor. Hold this position for four to eight breaths for the static version. You can place your hands under your lower back for support, keeping your elbows resting on the ground. Alternatively, move on with the dynamic version, exhaling as you return to the starting position. Repeat, moving in and out of the Little Bridge while inhaling and exhaling.

### **Precaution**

If you have neck injuries or problems, do this asana with care. Don't move your neck from side to side and prevent your spine from jerking. Never extend beyond your comfort level.

### **Benefit**

This asana is good for mind and body as well. It stretches the chest, neck, and spine and stimulates abdominal organs, lungs, and thyroid. It is an excellent rejuvenator for tired legs. It improves digestion, reduces anxiety, fatigue, backache, headache, and insomnia. It is a good asana for women as it helps to relieve the symptoms of menopause and menstrual discomfort. It is a therapeutic posture for asthma, high blood pressure, osteoporosis, and sinusitis. It also calms the brain and helps alleviate stress and mild depression.



## **4. Savasana**

### **What is Savasana?**

Savasana also known as Mrta-asana or "Corpse Pose" is an ultimate relaxing pose that is mainly practiced as a concluding asana at any yoga session. The word Mrta and Shava refers to dead body in Sanskrit. In this pose one loosens all his limbs and lie motionless as a dead person thus the name Savasana. It is one of the most difficult to master poses because though lying relaxed and motionless one should be fully conscious and awoken. The "conscious" part of Savasana is the most difficult because people tend to drift off to sleep while doing Savasana. This relaxing posture rejuvenates one's body, mind and spirit.

### **Explanation**

Start with sitting in Dandasana with your legs stretched in front and hands resting on your sides. Then bend your knees and move your torso backward while resting your elbows on the floor. Rest your torso with arms at a 45-degree angle to your torso and palms facing up. Now extend your legs slightly

apart with your feet naturally falling to either side. Now relax completely. The back of the neck should be extended, chin slightly tucked in toward the chest, lengthening the upper spine.

Take care that the spine and legs are aligned and that you are evenly relaxed on the right and left sides. If this pose is done at the end of a session, remain in Savasana for about five minutes, breathing easily. To come out of the position without disturbing your peaceful state, stretch out your body and take a deep breath. Roll onto your side into the fetal position, and then gradually ease your way up to a sitting or standing position, moving slowly without any sudden or jerky movements.

### **Benefit**

It is an ultimate relaxing pose that provides relaxation to mind and body as well. It calms the brain and helps relieve stress and mild depression. It reduces headache, fatigue, nervousness and helps to cure asthma, constipation, diabetes, indigestion, insomnia, and lumbago. It improves concentration also.

### **Precaution**

If you have back injury or discomfort then practice this pose with your knees bent and your feet on the floor or support the bent knees on a bolster. Pregnant women can raise their head and chest on a bolster if they wish to do this asana.

## **5. Dandasana**

### **What is Dandasana?**

Dandasana is the simplest form of sitting posture on which many other Asanas are based.

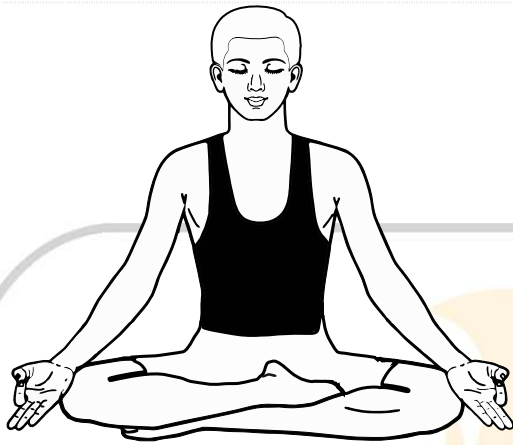
### **Explanation**

Sit with your legs straight and feet together and place your hands on the ground on either side of your body with fingers pointing forward. Make sure you breathe normally and have your eyes closed for concentration. It is advisable to sit in this position for a little time before practicing other asanas based on Dandasana.

### **Benefit**

It relaxes a person's body and mind when over strained and exhausted. It also prepares a person to do the other asanas.





## 6. *Swastikasana*

### **What is Swastikasana?**

It's a very simple and easy sitting position with a straight back, suitable for meditation. Swastika represents an auspicious symbol of fertility and creativity.

### **Explanation**

Sit cross-legged and keep your back straight without bending either to the side or front. Fold your legs and place your hands on the knees in Jnana Mudra as shown in the photograph. Close your eyes and concentrate on Shoonya (nothingness). Sitting in this position for 10 to 15 minutes gives all the benefits mentioned below.

### **Benefit**

It helps to maintain normal temperature within the body and tones abdominal muscles and sciatic nerve. It improves one's concentration power. This is a very suitable position for knowledge, learning, meditation, preparation for other asanas and relaxation between any two sitting position.

## 7. *Taala Asana (Taada Asana)*

### **What is Taala Asana?**

'Taala' and 'Taada' mean a palm tree. With upward stretched arms, the body resembles a palm tree. This asana is also commonly called Taadasana.

### **Explanation**

Stand straight, keep the feet three to six inches apart, lift the arms up from side or front straight above the head and stand on tip of the toes. Breathe in slowly while moving your arms up and breathe out slowly while bringing them down. This movement is one unit. Do 20 to 30 such repetitions in one sitting.

### **Benefit**

It helps strengthening the spine and increases a person's height. It helps in cleansing of your digestive system and reduces fat deposition around the abdomen and buttocks.





## 8. *Padmasana (Kamalasana)*

### **What is Padmasana?**

'Padma' and 'Kamala' means lotus. The position resembles a lotus, a very calm, peaceful and holy symbol. The Hindu God, Lord Shiva and the founder of Buddhism, Emperor Gautam Buddha are usually depicted in this posture. This is a basic posture on which many other Asanas are based. This is also one of the postures for meditation and many other breathing exercises in yoga.

### **Explanation**

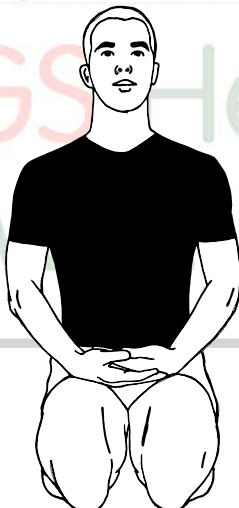
Sit in the Dandasana position. Fold the right knee, put the right ankle on to the left thigh, and then pull the left ankle over the folded right leg and place it on the right thigh. The head, neck and spine must be straight. Place your hands on your knees with the fingers depicting the holy sign, as in Chin or Jnana Mudra. Close your eyes and concentrate on your normal breathing. Sit in this position as long as you can. You can also do many other yogic practices and procedures while sitting in this asana.

### **Benefit**

It improves concentration and relaxes the mind if exhausted or over strained. It's very suitable for meditation, Pranayama and many other yogic procedures. It also helps digestion.

### **Precaution**

Do not fold legs forcefully. It takes few days for your legs to bend smoothly without pain and discomfort. For the first few days, practice folding only one leg. This half lotus position is also called 'Ardha Padmasana'.



Front View

## 9. *Vajrasana*

### **What is Vajrasana?**

'Vajra' means diamond. The body is rigid as a diamond in this posture. This is a basic position for many other asanas and meditation.

### **Explanation**

Sit in the Dandasana position. Place the palms on the floor near the thighs. Supporting your weight on the right palm, bend the left leg at the knee and pull the ankle under the left buttock. Do the same with the right leg by supporting the body weight on the left palm. The toes point backwards and towards the ground while space is kept between the ankles.



Side View

Do meditation with normal breathing or do Pranayama with different breathing techniques in this position for 10 to 15 minutes.

**Benefit**

Relaxes your kneecaps, knees, ankles and feet, improves digestion and reduces gas, Relieves sciatica pain. 'Vajrasana', if done for 10 minutes after a full meal relieves heaviness in stomach due to overeating.

**Precaution**

Do not sit on your ankles.



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