

Suggestions for yoga practice

Initial Relaxation

Rest in savasana the relaxation pose. Hips relaxed, toes to corners, legs released onto floor, or knees bent to protect lower back. Back in neutral position, natural curve at lumbar region. Back of neck long, throat and neck relaxed. Arms a few inches from body with palms to ceiling, or hands resting on abdomen. Jaw and face soft and relaxed.

Breathe easy in the body. Gradually begin to deepen the breath allowing the diaphragm to move freely so that the belly rises up on inhalation and sinks back down on exhalation. Relax and breathe for a few minutes, letting go of the day, scanning the body, noticing how it feels. Focus on the breathing to become really present with the movement of the breath and the state of the mind and body.

When preparing to move start gently with fingers and toes, then ankles and wrists, then arms and legs. Finally stretch arms above head reaching fingers and toes in opposite directions, exhale arms back by sides, draw knees to chest, rock side to side to massage back to floor and then gently sit up.

Pawanmuktasana

Gentle yoga stretches to loosen the joints of the body and free the energy flow

The practices may be performed in two ways:

1. with awareness of the actual physical movement, mindful of what is taking place inside the moving joint(s)
2. with awareness and integrated breathing. In addition to the physical awareness described above the movements are synchronised with the breath
 - All movements to be repeated 5-10 times each
 - All practices to be performed from the base position – sitting tall with legs out in front, or seated on a chair. Rest hands to floor or in lap.
 - Practices **A - I** can be performed with one or both limbs at a time depending on preference

A Toe bending

Curl toes to sole of foot and squeeze, lift toes stretching sole of foot. Exhale whilst curling toes towards sole of foot, inhale whilst stretching toes

B Ankle bending

Point foot stretching front of ankle, flex foot stretching back of ankle. Exhale whilst pointing foot, inhale whilst flexing foot

C Ankle rotation

Slowly and smoothly circle foot at ankle one way and then the other.
Exhale on the downward movement and inhale on the upward movement)

D Knee bending

From the chair lift foot into the air and then place foot back to the ground.
Stretch out through the back of the knee. Use alternate legs.
Inhale to lift and straighten and exhale to lower and bend.

E Hip joints

Standing, use a chair or wall for support if you wish or practice your balance too and don't hold on to anything! Bend the knee up in front of you and lift it in the air to flex the hip, then place back down to the floor, use alternate legs. Keep the torso neutral and the spine long.
Another option is to lift the knees to the corners.
Inhale to lift and exhale to lower.

F Hand clenching

Hold arm(s) out in front of body, palm(s) down. Spread fingers as wide as possible then make a fist with the thumb inside or outside the fingers.
Inhale whilst spreading fingers, exhale whilst making a fist

G Wrist bending

Hold arm(s) out in front of body, palm(s) down. Bend wrist to lift hand so fingers point to the sky, bend wrist to lower hand, fingers point to the ground.
Inhale whilst lifting hand, exhale whilst lowering hand.

H Wrist rotation

Extend arm(s) in front, make a gentle fist. Slowly and smoothly circle one way and then the other.
Exhale on the downward movement and inhale on the upward movement

I Elbow bending

Part 1: Stretch arm(s) in front at shoulder height or lower if needed palms facing up. Bend elbows and touch fingers to shoulders, straighten arms again.

Part 2: Stretch arm(s) to side at shoulder height or lower palms facing up. . Bend elbows and touch fingers to shoulders, straighten arms again.

Inhale whilst straightening elbows, exhale whilst bending elbows,.

J Shoulder rotation

Part 1: Touch fingers to shoulders, hold elbow out to side at shoulder height or lower. Make small circles first one direction and then the other gently mobilising shoulder joint.

Part 2: Touch fingers to shoulders, hold elbows down towards waist. Make large circles in each direction, drawing elbows close together in front of the body, lifting high and squeezing shoulder blades at back. Inhale on the upwards movement and exhale on the downward movement.

Head movements to stretch neck

Part 1: Lower chin to chest, tilt head back lifting face and chin, careful not to collapse back of neck. Exhale whilst lowering, inhale whilst lifting

Part 2: turn head to look side to side over shoulder, moving slowly and smoothly. Exhale to turn, inhale back to the centre.

Part 3: Lower ear to shoulder and lift back to centre, alternating sides. Exhale whilst lowering, inhale whilst lifting

Other exercises yet to be audio recorded!

The spine

The spine can bend forward, backwards, sideways and twist. It is good to take the spine through its full range of movement – here are some ideas

Seated forward bend

Rest the elbows onto the knees, round the back and lower the head forward to stretch the back – pause and breathe deeply. If it's comfortable lower the chest to the thighs and dangle the head and arms down towards the feet – a much deeper stretch but only if you are comfortable with your head lower than your heart. NOT recommended if you have low BP or dizziness.

Cat and cow

Place hands on chair or knees. Or can be performed seated.

Exhale into cat – back curved, head between arms, belly drawn in.

Inhale into cow – belly relaxed, chest and chin open, back gently arched

Side bending

Seated on a chair, reach down towards the floor with one hand, engage in the side of the waist and draw the belly inwards. Sense the openness in the opposite side and back. Inhale coming up to the centre and exhale to the side. Alternate sides as many times as you feel is beneficial and comfortable.

Twisting

Seated on a chair turn the torso, shoulders and head to look over your shoulder. Place one hand across the body and press lightly on the knee, bring the other hand to wherever is comfortable. Inhale to centre, exhale to twist the other way. Continue, alternating sides for as many rounds as you wish.

Shavasana – final relaxation

Lie down in Savasana as in initial relaxation.

Part 1: tense and release different body parts, squeeze muscles and exhale on release – right foot and leg, left foot and leg, buttocks, shoulder blades, both fists and arms, shoulders to ears, face, squeeze mouth and eyes, open eyes and mouth wide and exhale, ‘haaa’ (lion pose), adjust position, make body comfortable

Part 2: Repeat the following silently in your mind and take your focus to each body part in turn consciously relaxing and releasing:

I relax my toes, the soles of my feet my heels...
I relax my ankles, my calves, my shins...
I relax my knees, my thighs, my buttocks and hips...
I breathe deeply my legs are relaxing...
I breathe deeply my legs are relaxed.

I relax my lower back, my middle back, my upper back...
I relax my abdomen and inner organs
I relax my chest, my heart, my lungs...
I breathe deeply my torso is relaxing...
I breathe deeply my torso is relaxed.

I relax my fingers, my palms, my wrists...
I relax my lower arms, my elbows, my upper arms...
I relax my shoulder blades and collar bone...
I breathe deeply my arms are relaxing...
I breathe deeply my arms are relaxed.

I relax my neck, my throat, my jaw...
I relax my mouth, my cheeks, my ears...
I relax my nose, my eyes, my eyebrows...
I relax my forehead, my scalp, my brain...
I breathe deeply my head and face are relaxing...
I breathe deeply my head and face are relaxed.

My whole body is relaxing...
My whole body is relaxed.

Relax and breathe until ready to awaken refreshed and revived! When preparing to move start gently with fingers and toes, then ankles and wrists, then arms and legs. Finally stretch arms above head reaching fingers and toes in opposite directions, exhale arms back by sides, draw knees to chest, rock side to side to massage back to floor and then gently sit up.