



Yoga for Rehab

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Introduction

Welcome to the Yoga group. For some of you this will be the first experience with this practice. Yoga is very old. Originally it comes from India and first appeared around 5,000 years ago. Today yoga is practiced all over the world by all age groups. Yoga is relaxing and incorporates the breath with each movement. Yoga helps balance body parts and muscles, increases awareness of posture and improves balance, strength and flexibility. Yoga is noncompetitive. Do what is comfortable for you today. Over time you will see improvements. Most of all Yoga is fun!

The Breath

Starting position: Sit upright and toward the front half of the chair with your back away from the chair. If you are unable to maintain this posture, you can rest back against the chair.

Breathe normally. Begin focusing on your breath by sensing and feeling the movement of air in and out. Notice how the chest rises and falls with each breath. Be aware of any tension you may feel in the shoulders, neck, chest, back, arms and legs. As your body relaxes, allow the breath to deepen and become longer. Keep your focus on the movement of the air. If your mind wanders, and know that it will wander, gently bring your focus back to the breath. Keep your attention on your breath for about 4 to 5 minutes.

Three Part Breath

As you inhale allow the belly to extend outward. Let the breath travel up opening and expanding the ribs. Continue to feel the breath travel up the torso. Allow the collar bones to separate. Notice that although this is one long breath, it has 3 parts: belly, lower ribs, upper ribs and collar bone. As you exhale it reverses: collar bones, upper ribs, lower ribs and belly. Repeat this 2 more times.

Brahmin Breath

Cover your ears with your hands. Inhale. On the exhale, make a humming sound by saying, "HUMMM..." When your breath runs out, take another breath and repeat 2 more times.

Alternate Nostril Breathing

For this breathing exercise you will use the 1st and 4th fingers of 1 hand to cover your nostrils one at a time. Curl the 2nd and 3rd fingers down to the palm so they aren't in your way. Take a moment to practice this before you start the breathing.

Inhale a full breath. Cover the right nostril with the 1st or 4th finger (depending on which hand you are using). Exhale through the left open nostril. Inhale through the left nostril. Cover it with the 1st or 4th finger. Release the right nostril and exhale. Inhale through the right nostril. Cover it with the finger. Release the left nostril and exhale.

Continue the cycle of alternate nostril breathing for 5 cycles. This breath will energize you and prepare you for the rest of the class.

Posture 1: Seated Mountain Pose

Starting position: Sit toward the front of the chair with your feet flat on the floor, hands resting comfortably on the lap, palms up, feet about 1 1/2 feet apart. This is called seated mountain pose and it is the starting position for most of the poses in this class. (Figure 1) Inhale slowly and deeply as you lengthen from the base of your spine, up through the center of the trunk and through the top of your head. Exhale and continue the slow, deep breaths throughout this exercise and the class. Allow the breath to move in and out at your own timing. Inhale and lengthen the trunk. Imagine the spaces between the vertebrae growing longer. Take another breath as you feel the weight evenly distributed between the buttocks and feet on the ground. Let the weight rest on these 2 points of support; the chair and the floor. Breathe slowly and deeply as you lengthen the sides of the waist. Feel the head centered over the shoulders, the trunk centered over the pelvis. Focus your attention on your breath as you allow your abdomen to rise and fall. Sense the sides of the rib cage opening on the inhale.



Figure 1

Posture 2: Marionette Arms

Start in seated mountain pose.

- Inhale as you slowly and gently raise the right elbow out to the side keeping the arm relaxed. Allow the hand and fingers to droop down like a puppet. (Figure 2.1)
- When the elbow is just about shoulder height, take another breath as you begin to lift the hand and extend the elbow keeping the hand and fingers relaxed and droopy. (Figure 2.2)
- Inhale as you fully lengthen the arm, hand and fingers toward the ceiling. Notice how the torso stretches and lengthens too. (Figure 2.3)
- Continue to reach upward for a count of 3 as you breathe in and out.
- Slowly reverse the arm movements as you bring your the arm back to your lap.
- Take a moment to notice any change in your breathing. Are the ribs on the right side expanding or moving more when you inhale?
- Repeat with the left arm.
- Perform these movements two more times with each arm.



Figure 2.1



Figure 2.2



Figure 2.3

Posture 3: Elbow Rolls

Start in seated mountain pose.

- Touch the top of your shoulders with your finger tips and raise your elbows straight out to the side. (Figure 3.1)
- Slowly circle the elbows forward 3 times and rest. Lift your elbows again and circle them backward 3 times and rest. Work gently making smooth circles. If the movement has a jerky quality, make the circles smaller and move a little slower.
- Raise the elbows again and slowly bring your elbows together in front of your body. (Figure 3.2) Breathe out and let the front of your chest soften as you do this movement. Notice that your lower back rounds a little. As you inhale stretch your elbows horizontally as if you were trying to touch your elbows behind your back. (Figure 3.3) Notice that your lower back arches slightly. Repeat 3 times.



Figure 3.1



Figure 3.2

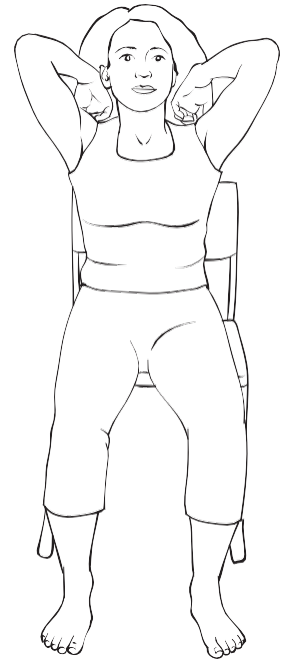


Figure 3.3

Posture 4: Head and Neck Stretches



Figure 4.1



Figure 4.2



Figure 4.3



Figure 4.4

Start in seated mountain pose, looking front. Repeat each movement 3 times.

- Inhale as you look up to the ceiling and lift the chin. (Figure 4.1) Exhale as you bring the eyes and head back to center. Inhale, lengthen the torso. Exhale as you lower the eyes and chin toward the chest. (Figure 4.2) Inhale as you bring the eyes and chin back to center. Try to keep the body still as you focus on the movements of the head. Repeat 3 times.
- Inhale, turning the head right looking over the right shoulder. (Figure 4.3) Exhale and return to center. Inhale and turn the head left looking over the left shoulder. Exhale and return to center. Try to move only the head, keeping the body still. Repeat 3 times.
- Inhale, tilt the head right, right ear toward the right shoulder. (Figure 4.4) Make sure you are not turning but just tilting. Exhale and return to center. Inhale, bend the head left, left ear toward the left shoulder. Exhale and return to center. Try to keep the shoulders even and the body still. Repeat 3 times.
- Experiment with reversing the breathing so you start with the exhale first. Whatever breathing pattern you choose, let the breath move in and out and keep it gentle and relaxed.

Posture 5: Cat/Camel

Start in seated mountain pose, hands resting on the lap.

- Inhale, as you arch the spine, rocking the pelvis forward, shoulders back, head up. (Figure 5.1)
- Exhale, as you reverse the curve tilting the pelvis back, rounding the spine, and bringing the chin toward the chest. (Figure 5.2)
- Continue to move slowly and gently from arched to rounded positions following the breath, massaging the spine with the movements. Notice if any part of the body is stiff or restricted. Don't force the movement but allow the breath to help the muscles soften.



Figure 5.1



Figure 5.2

Posture 6: Cat/Camel with Arm/Leg

Start in seated mountain pose.

Repeat the previous exercise adding the following movements. Inhale as you:

- Raise the right arm forward and up on the inhale. (Figure 6.1) Exhale as you lower the arm.
- Repeat with the left arm.
- Slide the right leg forward on the inhale (Figure 6.2), slide in on the exhale.
- Repeat with the left leg.
- If you are unable to move the arm or leg due to pain or weakness, let it go for today. It may be possible tomorrow or the next day.



Figure 6.1



Figure 6.2



Figure 6.3

Posture 7: Shifting Side to Side

Start in seated mountain pose, hands resting on the lap.

- Inhale as you shift your weight onto the right buttock. Take another breath as you lengthen the right side of the body and waist. (Figure 7.1)
- Repeat, shifting the weight to the left side.
- Inhale as you shift your weight onto your right buttock and lift the right arm sideways and overhead. Continue to breathe and lengthen the right side of the body and arm for a count of 5. (Figure 7.2)
- Repeat, shifting left and raising the left arm.
- Inhale as you shift right and slide your left leg along the floor to the left. Your upper body will turn a little to the right. Continue to breathe and lengthen the right side of the body and waist as you rotate right.
- Repeat, shifting left and sliding the right leg to the right turning the upper body a little to the left.
- Inhale as you shift right, slide the left leg left and raise the right arm side and overhead. Your upper body will turn a little to the right. Continue to breathe as you lengthen the right side of the body and waist. (Figure 7.3)
- Repeat, shifting left, sliding the right leg right, raising the left arm side and as you turn left.



Figure 7.1



Figure 7.2



Figure 7.3

Posture 8: Side Bending

Start in seated mountain pose, legs separated wider to provide a larger base of support.

- Inhale and bend toward your right side, resting the right forearm on the right thigh. Breathe in and out slowly as you lengthen the left side of the torso. Turn the head left and open the left shoulder. Take a couple of slow, relaxed breaths in this position as you lengthen the left arm side and up toward the ceiling. Feel the left side of the buttocks firmly planted on the seat as you stretch through the left side of the torso and left arm. (Figure 8.1)
- Repeat bending left, lengthening the right side. Turn the head right and open the right shoulder. Lift the right arm toward the ceiling.
- Perform the sequence 2 more times on each side.

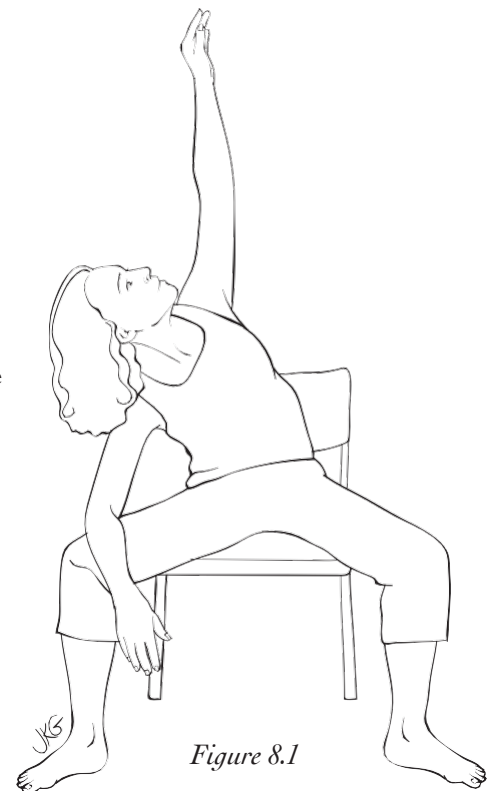


Figure 8.1

Posture 9: Foot Lengthener

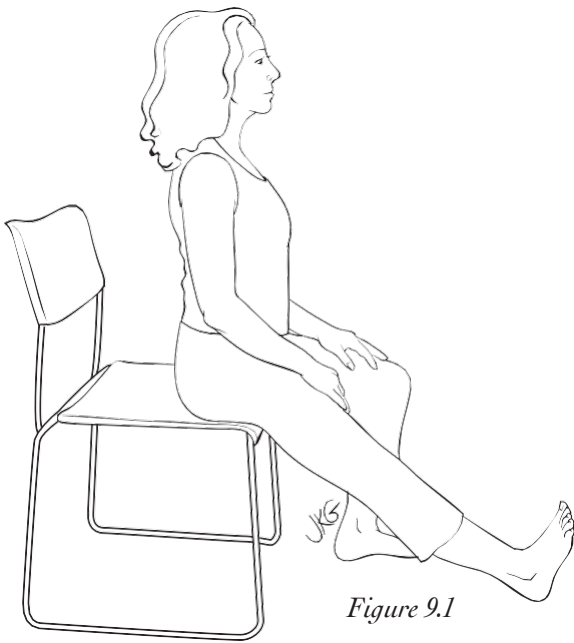


Figure 9.1

Start in seated mountain pose.

- Slide your right leg forward on the floor straightening the right knee. Let the heel of the foot rest on the floor. (Figure 9.1)
- Bend your ankle moving the toes up and down keeping the heel on the floor. Repeat 3 times.
- Rotate your ankle in a circle clockwise 3 times. Go slowly making smooth continuous circles. Now reverse the circle in a counterclockwise direction 3 times.
- Repeat the sequence with the left leg.

Posture 10: Leg Lengthener

Start in seated mountain pose legs separated wide apart.

- Inhale as you slide the right leg forward. Take another breath as you lengthen the torso tall and lean a little forward until you feel a stretch in the back of the thigh. Take a couple of slow, relaxed breathes lengthening the torso as the hamstring stretches. (Figure 10.1)
- Repeat the sequence with the left leg.
- Inhale as you slide the right leg right. Take a couple of slow, relaxed breathes lengthening the torso as the inner thigh stretches. (Figure 10.2)
- Repeat the sequence with the left leg.

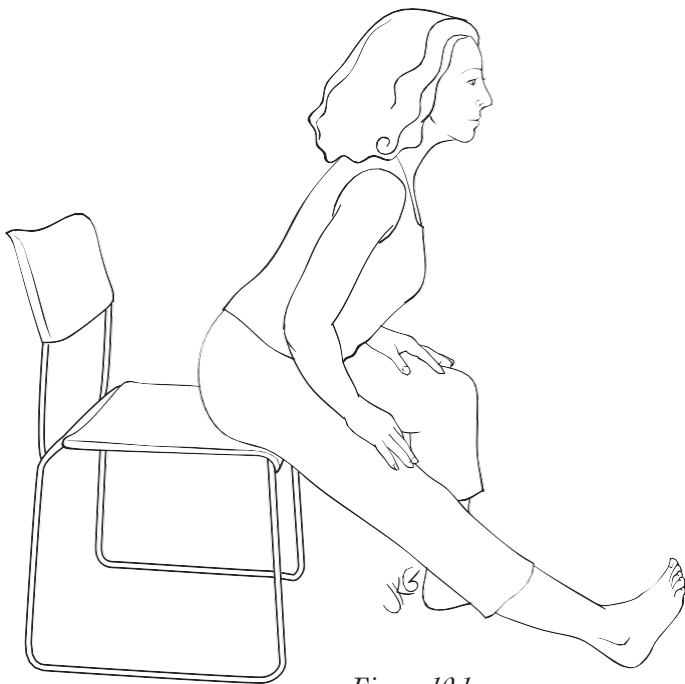


Figure 10.1



Figure 10.2

Posture 11: Standing Balance (Optional)

Start standing behind your chair, hands resting lightly on the chair.

- Inhale standing tall, equal weight on each foot. Exhale as you lift the right leg behind you about 1 to 2 inches off the floor, keeping the knee straight. (Figure 11.1) Maintain level hips and stay tall on the left leg. Breathe in and out for a count of 5.
- Repeat the sequence on the left leg.

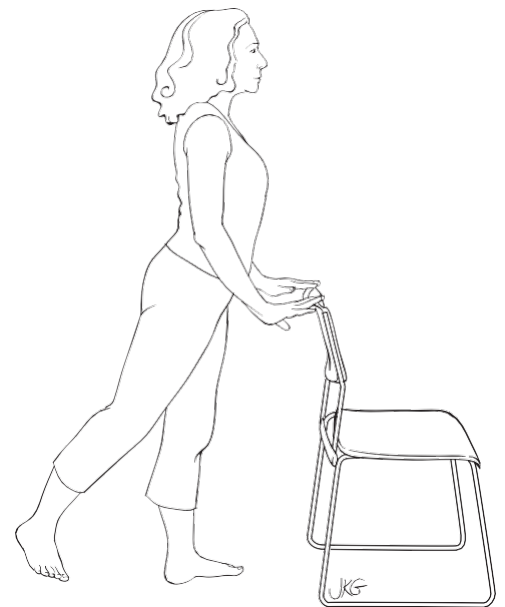


Figure 11.1

Posture 12: Standing Tree Pose (Optional)

Start standing behind your chair, hands resting lightly on the chair for balance.

- Focus on a spot on the wall and breathe easily as you lift your right foot and place it on the inside of your left leg as high as you comfortably can. Take a couple of slow, relaxed breaths here as you lengthen the body from the head through the torso, pelvis and left leg. (Figure 12.1)
- When you feel steady, breathe in as you slowly raise your right arm overhead. If you feel comfortable, raise the left arm as well. (Figure 12.2)
- Keep focusing on the spot on the wall. Breathe easily for a count of 5. Lower your arm(s) and leg.
- Repeat the sequence lifting the left foot.



Figure 12.1

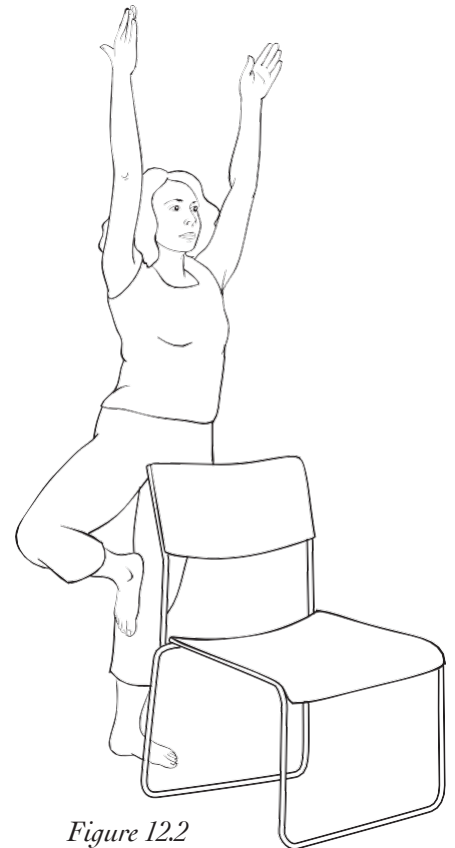


Figure 12.2

Last Posture: Sabasana, Relaxation

Return to seated mountain pose, but this time move backward and let your back relax against the back of the chair. Make yourself as comfortable as possible in the chair. Close your eyes and let your body rest. Quiet your mind and focus on your breath. Feel the chest rise and fall. Let your arms and legs go. Feel your body supported by the chair. When your mind wanders, gently bring your focus back to your breath. Let your body rest quietly for 4 to 5 minutes. If your mind wanders, gently bring your focus back to the breath.

After 4 or 5 minutes, slowly begin to wiggle the fingers and toes, rock your head slowly from side to side. Begin to open your eyes. Notice how your body feels after the class. Has anything changed? If something has changed, can you describe what the difference is?