



# Yoga Poses for Relief

Get your Zen on to help ease your pain.

Can a 5,000-year-old exercise system that originated in India help people with chronic diseases feel better and function more effectively? More and more, the answer appears to be yes. Yoga synchronizes various postures (*asanas*) and breathing methods (*pranayama*) to help release tension and produce a state of physical and mental peace. In addition to other benefits, yoga can help ease arthritic and psoriatic flare-ups, lower blood pressure and reduce body-wide inflammation. Here are some simple moves to get you started. As with all exercise regimens, check with your doctor before you begin.

— Elizabeth Bell

## Spinal Twist

Goal: To increase side-to-side mobility and spinal flexibility

- From a seated position on the floor, extend your left leg with your foot flexed. Cross your right leg over your left knee, placing your right foot flat on the ground.
- Wrap your left arm around your right shin, and feel your spine expand from the waist as it decompresses your vertebrae.
- As you inhale, raise your right arm up to shoulder level, bring it around and place your palm flat on the floor. Your right hand should be fairly close to your buttocks to give your spine support.
- Keep your neck long and your chin level. Then direct your gaze toward the right. If your range of motion allows it, look over your right shoulder.
- Hold this stretch for several breaths.
- Repeat the same sequence on the left side.



## Leg Cradling

Goal: To release tension in the gluteus (buttocks)

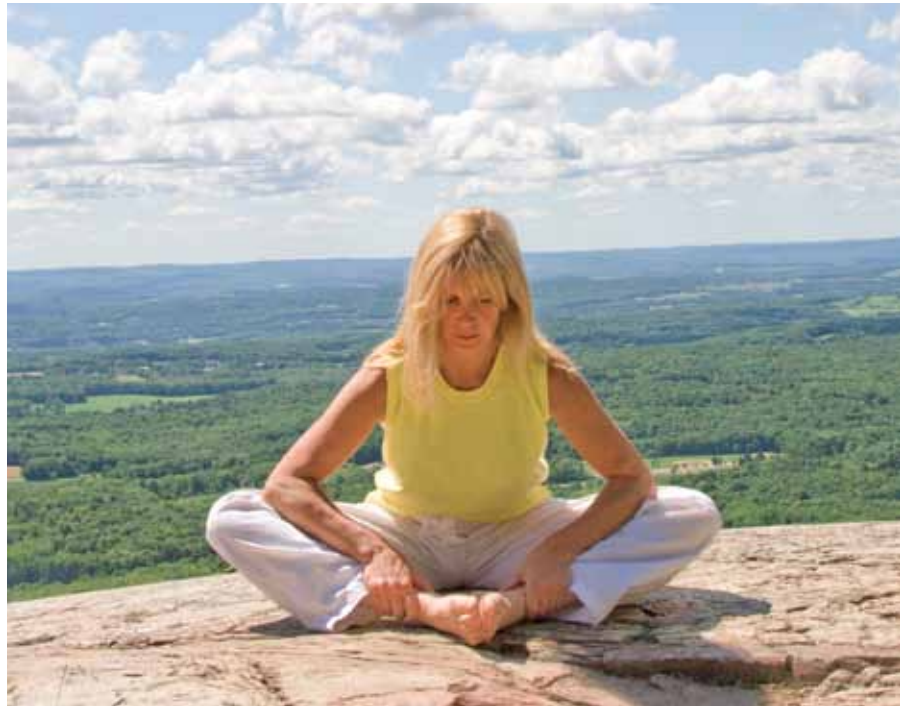
- From a seated position on the floor, extend your right leg with your foot flexed. Bend your left knee, placing your left foot into your right hand. Keep your left foot flexed.
- Wrap your left arm around the outside of your left leg and gently rock from side to side.
- Come to center and gently lean back, lowering your chin slightly toward your chest.
- Inhale and exhale, releasing tension from the left side of your body.
- Release your leg, return to the starting position, and repeat on the other side.



### Shoulder Stretch

Goal: To increase circulation and release tension in the shoulders

- Stand with your feet slightly apart to help you maintain balance.
- As you inhale, bring your left arm up to shoulder level.
- As you exhale, draw that arm across your body to the right, with your palm facing away from you.
- Fix your gaze over your right shoulder.
- Inhale and exhale several times while in this position.
- Repeat on the opposite side.



### Bound Angle

Goal: To release tension in the inner groin and sacral area

- From a seated position on the floor, bring the soles of your feet together.
- Keep your knees open so the outsides of your legs move toward the floor.
- Inhale as you lift up from the waist.
- Exhale as your spine becomes straight from the lift.
- Leaning forward slightly, use your forearms to gently press your knees down.
- Keep your neck extended and your jaw relaxed.
- With every inhale and exhale, release tension from your body.
- Repeat the move, inhaling as you lift from your abdomen and exhaling as you use your forearms to gently press your knees down.



### Child's Posture

Goal: To relieve back pain

- Sit back on your heels with your forehead forward and arms extended.
- Inhale and exhale, releasing tension in your lower back.
- Rest following each breath.



### Side Warrior

Goal: To build strength and endurance in legs and arms and tone the abdomen

- Stand up straight with your feet 3'-4' apart, toes pointed forward.
- Turn your right foot 90 degrees to the right, so that your right heel is aligned with the instep of your left foot, the toes of which should point slightly toward the right.
- Keep your hips and shoulders in alignment.
- As you inhale, raise your arms slightly above shoulder level, palms facing down.
- Bend your right knee, keeping it directly above your ankle.
- Arms should remain strong but relaxed; shoulder blades should draw toward each other as you focus your gaze down the length of your right arm.
- Inhale deeply, and then exhale as you lean a little deeper into the lunge.
- As you again inhale and exhale, straighten your right leg and release the posture.
- Return to standing position and repeat the move using the left leg.



### Lateral Neck Stretch

Goal: To release tension and increase circulation in the neck

- Stand with your feet hip-width apart, arms by your sides, with your chin facing forward and level.
- As you inhale, bring your right arm up and over your head, gently clasping the left side of your head.
- Draw your head to the right to gently stretch the left side of your neck.
- Inhale and exhale to release tension.
- Return to starting position.
- Repeat the move using your left arm.

### Forward Bend

Goal: To release tension in the back of the legs and lower back

- From a seated position on the floor, extend your legs with your feet flexed.
- Inhale as you raise your arms to shoulder level.
- Exhale as you bend forward from your hips, keeping your spine straight and placing your hands on your legs.
- Keep your neck extended and in line with your spine.
- Inhale and exhale, releasing tension from your body.

