

## YOGA PRACTICE FOR LOWER BACK PAIN



This practice is designed to help alleviate the symptoms of lower back pain which can be caused by injury, poor posture, repetitive motion, or simply ageing. Routine stretching can both prevent and relieve symptoms, so use these poses to ease tension in your back, hips, hamstrings and inner legs. Practice as a continuous sequence or by combining one or two different poses depending on time available.



### **Apanâsana (knees to chest pose):**

Begin by lying on your back on the floor and hugging both legs into the chest. Gently rock from side to side, slowly and with ease, massaging over the spine. Take 5 deep breaths.



### **Ardha Apanâsana (half knee-to-chest pose):**

From apanâsana, extend the left leg to straight resting it along the floor and flex the left foot so the toes extend up to the sky. Keep the right knee bent into the chest interlacing both hands around the knee and gently press. Take 5 slow breaths, then release the right leg to the floor and repeat on the other side.



### **Jathara Parivartaranâsana (reclining twist pose):**

Bend your right knee into the chest placing your right arm out to the side at shoulder height and keeping the left hand on the right knee. Extend the left leg straight along the floor. Breathe in, and as you exhale draw the right knee over to the left side and turn the head to the right. Hold for 5 breaths. Repeat on the other side.



Image 1



Image 2



Image 3

### **Supta Padangustâsana (reclining hand to big toe pose):**

- a). Loop a strap (or towel/scarf) around the arch of the right foot extending it straight up toward the ceiling and drop the toes down toward you, flexing through the foot. Walk both hands up the strap until the arms are fully extended. The left leg lies straight along the floor with the foot flexed also. Hold for 5 breaths keeping the leg straight and without feeling the need to pull the leg in toward you. (Image 1)
- b). Now take both sides of the strap in the right hand while the left arm extends out to the side. Breathe in, and as you breathe out, open the right leg out to the right side (as open as you can comfortably manage or until you feel a stretch in the right groin,) and try to avoid that the left hip lifts and rolls over too. Pin the left hip down in to the ground. Hold for 5 breaths and then raise the leg back to the centre. (Image 2)
- c). Swap hands, so now the strap is in the left hand and the right arm is outstretched to the side. Inhale, and as you exhale take the right leg over to the left at a 45 degree angle (approximately). Hold for 5 breaths. Bring the leg back to the centre. (Image 3)

Repeat the same sequence with the strap around the left foot.

**Benefits:** stretches hips, thighs, hamstrings, groins and calves, strengthens the knees, improves digestion, relieves backache and sciatica.



### Jathara Parivartaranâsana (reclining twist pose):

Release the strap and bend the knees back into the chest (apanâsana) extending the arms out at shoulder height on either side of the body. Breathe in, and on the exhalation lower both legs slowly to the right side until they reach the floor creating a twist through your spine. Turn the head gently to the left. Make sure you keep the left shoulder pressing firmly down onto the floor. You can then take your right hand and rest it on the top leg to press the top thigh closer to the bottom thigh. Relax fully and concentrate your breath into the left lateral side of the body feeling the expansion of the intercostal muscles. Hold for 5 breaths. Inhaling, lift the knees back to the chest and repeat on the other side.



### Marjaryâsana/Bitilâsana (cat/cow):

Start on all fours in a "tabletop" position. Make sure your wrists are stacked directly below your shoulders and the knees below the hips. As you exhale, round your spine up to the ceiling, dropping the tailbone and head and pushing up through the hands to round the spine to its maximum curvature. On the inhalation, lift the head (reaching forward through the crown of the head not the chin), lift the sit bones up to the sky, drop the belly button toward the ground and press the chest forward through the arms. Do several rounds, keeping the movement smooth, stable and fluid and synchronising the breath with the movement. You can also close your eyes as you move through the wave like spinal movements in order to draw your attention inward.



#### **Ardho Mukha Svanâsana (downward facing dog):**

From the previous all fours position, tuck the toes under and lift up into downward facing dog. Lift the sit bones toward the sky tilting the pelvis upward and press the heels down to the floor to stretch the hamstrings. Relax the head down and press firmly through the palms of the hands drawing the arms toward each other to stabilise the shoulder girdle and to extend and lengthen the spine. Hold for 5 breaths. **Benefits:** calms the brain and helps relieve stress and mild depression, energises the body, stretches the shoulders, hamstrings, calves, arches and hands, strengthens the arms and legs, improves digestion, relieves headache, back pain, insomnia, and fatigue.



#### **Salambhâsana (locust pose):**

From downward facing dog, lower the knees to the floor coming back onto all fours. Gently lower down onto your belly extending the body along the ground and placing the forehead on the floor. Open the legs slightly to hip distance apart and allow the arms to rest on the floor along side your body, palms facing up. On an inhalation, lift the head, chest, arms and legs in an upward movement, hold briefly and then on the exhale release the body back to the ground. Think about lengthening the spine by projecting the chest forward instead of trying to lift up to maximum height. Project the legs back and the crown of the head forward toward the wall in front of you. Repeat 3-5 times.

**Benefits:** strengthens the muscles of the spine, buttocks and backs of the arms and legs, stretches the shoulders, chest, belly and thighs, improves posture, stimulates the abdominal organs and helps relieve stress.



#### **Balâsana (child's pose):**

From Salambhâsana, push back up into tabletop position and sit back on your heels. Fold your body forward until the forehead gently rests on the ground, relax the arms by your side (palms facing upward) and roll your shoulder heads down as you hold the pose for as long as comfortable. This pose replicates the primary curve of the unborn child and is a wonderful opportunity to consciously breathe into the back spaces of the body.

**Benefits:** gently stretches the hips, thighs and ankles, calms the brain and relieves stress and fatigue.



### **SetuBandha Sarvangâsana (bridge pose):**

Slowly come up from Balâsana and make your way down onto your back bending your knees up and placing the soles of the feet on the floor at hip distance apart. Let the arms rest by the side of the body. On your next inhale, press firmly through the feet and lift the hips off the floor toward the sky. Begin to shuffle the shoulders under your body to obtain more openness and lift through the chest. Interlace the hands together and stretch the arms toward the heels. Hold for 5 breaths, release the hands and then gently roll the spine back down onto the floor.



### **Supta baddha konâsana (reclined bound angle pose):**

From bridge pose, place the soles of the feet together allowing the legs to fully release open. Relax the hips, pelvis and groins. Close your eyes and take 5 slow, long, deep breaths. **Benefits:** stimulates abdominal organs like the ovaries and prostate gland, bladder and kidneys, stimulates the heart and improves general circulation, stretches the inner thighs, groins, and knees, helps relieve the symptoms of stress, mild depression, menstruation and menopause.

### **Savâsana (corpse pose):**

Extend your legs to straight, allowing your legs and arms to relax fully and your eyes to gently close. Turn your palms to face up and allow every muscle in your body to release. Feel your body connect with the earth below you. Scan and notice any places of tension, discomfort and holding. Approach these places with love extending appreciation to your body for its efforts, its strengths and for the challenges it faces. Try not to fall asleep, but stay with sensations as they become more subtle and as the breath ceases to be an effort. Let your eyes rest back into your skull, release your lower jaw and turn your senses inwards. Take rest for 5-10 minutes.

