

Yoga exercises to help improve your posture for meditation

Here is a list of some poses to help increase presence of mind plus agility and flexibility in joints to support meditation practice. Exercises are best done just prior to your meditation practice.

1. Spine Rotation

Spine rotation can loosen spine, neck and shoulders, improving blood flow.



- Stand with your feet flat on the floor, slightly wider than hip-width apart and with the knees slightly bent.
- Relax your arms by your sides.
- Rotate your hips to the right and to the left while letting your arms hang loosely. As you rotate your hips your shoulders, arms and head will follow in the same direction as your hips. With each rotation, your arms will be the last to rotate and should flap against your body.
- Repeat for 1-2 minutes or until you feel your body has warmed up.

2. Arm Circles



Arm circles help increase flexibility and relieve tightness in the shoulder girdle.

- Standing with knees softened and back straight
- Place your hands on your shoulders (like wings)
- Circle arms up and forward as you breath in and back and down as you breath out.
- Repeat 10 x then circle in the other direction

3. Standing Forward Bend

Forward bend can release tension in the spine and neck and improve blood flow to the brain.



- Stand with feet hip-width apart
- With knees softened (slightly bent), fold at the pelvis so you are hanging from the hips with head lowered
- The arms can hang towards the floor or hang with hands holding the elbows
- To make sure your neck muscles are relaxed - nod your head back and forward as if saying “yes”, then side to side as if saying “no”.
- Stay hanging for 10 -15 breaths
- Roll up slowly from the base of the spine or put the hands on the floor and move directly to Downward Dog by stepping both feet back about 1.5 leg lengths

4. Downward Dog



Downward Dog can work out kinks in the body and bring blood flow to the brain. Lengthens spine, calves and hamstrings and energizes your body.

- Stand with feet hip width apart and roll down as we did for forward bend.
- Bend the knees so your hands touch the ground
- Spread the fingers wide placing the palms of the hands firmly on the floor
- Walk the feet back till you are in a triangle position with heels off the floor if needed (you can lower one heel at a time to warm up the calves)
- Pressing into the hands lift the hips to the ceiling lengthening the spine (important that the spine is straight even if knees are bent and heels are off the floor)
- When you're in Downward Dog, you should externally rotate the upper arms, moving the shoulders away from the ears. Rotate your inner elbows so they are facing up. Press your hands firmly into the mat, especially in the thumb and forefinger region.
- Stay for 10 -15 breaths

5. Cat/Cow



Cat/Cow Pose increases flexibility of the neck, shoulders, and spine. The movement also stretches the muscles of the hips, back, abdomen, chest, and lungs. Cat Stretch held at its peak releases tension of the upper back and neck.

- Begin with your hands and knees on the floor, spine horizontal to the floor.
- On the exhale, tuck your tailbone under, round your spine up towards the ceiling, and imagine you're pulling your belly button up towards your spine.
- On the inhale, lift your tail bone up towards the ceiling, arch your back, let your belly relax and look up towards the ceiling.
- Repeat 10 x

6. Sphinx

Sphinx Pose is a gentle backbend suitable for most beginners. It lengthens the abdominal muscles, strengthens the spine, and firms the buttocks. It also stretches and opens the chest, lungs, and shoulders. Only go as high as is comfortable for your spine, if pregnant or very stiff in the shoulders and spine you may do this pose standing against a wall.



- Begin by lying face-down on the floor with your legs extended behind you, hip-width apart.
- Bring your arms up and rest your elbows under your shoulders with your forearms on the floor, parallel to each other. Point your middle fingers directly forward.
- Press the tops of your feet into the floor and spread your toes. Do not tuck your toes under, as this can crunch your spine.
- On an inhalation, press your forearms into the floor and lift your head and chest off the floor. Press your pubic bone into the floor. Strongly engage your legs. Roll your outer thighs slightly toward the floor to help lengthen your low back.
- Keep your elbows tucked in to your sides. Drop your shoulder blades down your back and draw your chest forward. Lengthen your tailbone toward your heels.
- Let your face and eyes soften. Hold for up to 10 breaths.
- To release, exhale as you slowly lower your torso, chest, and head to the floor. Relax your arms at your sides. Turn your head to the side and rest quietly.

7. Happy Baby

Happy Baby Pose is a gentle stretch for the hamstrings, inner thigh, and inner groin, a relaxation exercise for the back, and it also opens up the hips, shoulders, and chest.



- Lie on your back. With an exhale, bend your knees into your belly.
- Inhale, grip the outside of your feet with your hands (if you have difficulty holding the feet directly with your hands, use a strap or belt to put across the balls of your feet and hold the ends) Open your knees slightly wider than your torso, then bring them up toward your armpits.
- Position each ankle directly over the knee, so your shins are perpendicular to the floor. Flex the heels. Gently push your feet up into your hands (or the strap).
- Hold for 20 -30 breaths

8. Reclining Twist

This twist on your back is a great way to ready the spine, back muscles, abdominal muscles, and digestive tract. The outer hips also receive a stretch here. When you're ready to sit, your back muscles will be toned to support you.



- Lie on your back.
- Hug your knees into your chest and rock a few times side-to-side.
- Bring your knees out at 90 degrees and reach your arms out to your sides.
- On an exhale, allow your knees to tip over to the right side and come all the way to the ground or a cushion.
- Soften your shoulders to the ground and turn your head away from your knees.
- Hold the twist for 5 to 10 breaths.
- Repeat on the second side

Finish by lying on your back for 2 - 3 minutes. Bring your awareness to the body by doing a body scan starting from the top of the head and finishing at the feet. Then bring your awareness to your breath for 20 - 30 breaths.