

YOGA tips

To find a public class, look for restorative, gentle, beginner, Iyengar, Hatha, Viniyoga

Contact teacher or studio ahead of class, listen to your own cues

Yoga therapist: www.iayt.org

Online: YouTube: Yoga with Adrienne or Yoga International

A Short Yoga Practice for Low Back Pain:

**As you do the practice below, try to match your movements with your inhale and exhale. In the poses, you may feel stretching, but if anything is painful back off or don't do it.*

1. Start by finding a comfortable sitting position, either in a chair or on the ground. Place a hand on your belly and notice your breathing. After a few breaths, as you inhale start to feel your belly rise under your hand and as you exhale squeeze your belly button in. Try to let your exhale become longer and longer, fully emptying your lungs. Do this for 5-10 breaths.

2. **Cat/Cow:** Come to a table top position on hands and knees with your back flat. Your arms should be directly under your shoulders and your knees directly below your hips. As you inhale, flex your back slowly, looking forward and stretching your chest forward. As you exhale, arch your back, squeeze your belly up towards your spine, and press up through your hands. Repeat this 5 times.

*If this hurts your wrists, practice the same gentle flexing and arching of the spine while sitting in a chair.

Cat/Cow

Benefits:

- Mobility in neck, spine, shoulders, pelvis
- Awareness of spine
- Learning to move with breath-> very calming!



3. **Side Stretch:** Come back to a table position with a flat back. Inhale. As you exhale, look back over your right shoulder, stretching the left side of your body. Inhale and come back to center. Exhale and look to the left. Repeat this 5 times on each side

*A gentle side stretch can also be done from a chair.



4. **Twist:** Come back to table top. On an inhale, lift your right arm out to the side and up towards the ceiling. Follow the hand with your eyes, gently twisting your spine. As you exhale, bring the hand back to the ground, still following it with your gaze. Repeat 3 times on each side.

*This can also be done from a chair by starting with your arms straight out in front of you.



5. **Cobra Pose:** Lay on your stomach with your legs straight on the ground and together. Place your hands by your chest with your elbow squeezed into your body. Press your pubic bone into the ground and engage your abdominal muscles to protect your low back. On an inhale, without using your hands, use your back muscles to lift your head and chest off the ground. Keep your neck straight and tuck your chin in slightly. Let your shoulder blades relax down your back. Exhale and release back to the ground. Repeat 5 times. The last time, hold for 2-3 breaths and then released.

Cobra



Benefits:

- Great for improving slouching posture
- Strengthening spinal extensors
- Chest opening
- Stretching psoas



*This pose can also be done by standing a foot away from a wall. Lean your pelvis against the wall. Place your hands in front of your shoulders on the wall. Lift your chest up and away from the wall, again using the strength of your back muscles and not putting all of your weight in your hands.

5. **Figure 4 Stretch.** Lie flat on your back. Place your feet flat on the ground. Lift your right leg and place your right ankle on your left thigh making a figure 4 shape. If you would like a deeper stretch in your hips, you can put your hands behind your left thigh and pull your left foot off the ground. Hold for 4-5 breaths and then repeat on the other side.

Figure Four Stretch



Benefits:

- Flexibility in the hips (external rotators)



*The stretch can also be done in a chair by placing the left foot on the ground and lifting the right foot and placing it on the left thigh, making the figure 4 shape.

6. **Bridge Pose:** Lie flat on your back with your knees bent and your feet flat on the ground just below your hips. Put your hands on the ground, palms down, at your side. Inhale and lift your bottom off the ground and then slowly roll your spine off the ground one vertebrae at a time until only your feet, arms, and shoulders are touching. Exhale and slowly roll back down starting from the top of your spine and rolling down to the bottom. Repeat 5 times. The last time, hold for 3-4 breaths.



7. **Relaxation pose:** Lie flat on your back with your feet spread slightly and your arms resting to your sides. If this hurts your lower back, try placing a pillow under your knees or bending your knees. If needed you can even sit in a comfortable chair. Close your eyes. Notice how your body feels, starting from your feet and working up to your head. Then just notice your breathing again. Each time you exhale feel your body relax a little more. If you get lost in thought, that's OK. Just come back to the breathing again. Stay for 5-10 minutes if you have time. When you are done make sure to get up slowly.