



# Yoga for stretching and balance

**Please check with your doctor before starting any exercise program.**

Did you know that yoga can have great benefits for your mood? Although yoga can range from gentle to challenging, it can have a number of benefits for those who are struggling with depression or anxiety. It can improve your concentration and also help decrease your response to stress. Check out the basics of yoga and some poses to try below!

## Some tips to start...

- Be cautious. Many yoga techniques require you to move in ways that may be unfamiliar to your body; don't push too hard and stop if you experience pain.
- Make a space in your home or room to be sure you aren't bumping into things as you are trying to complete yoga poses.
- Get an exercise or yoga mat; this will help with balance and comfort.
- Take breaks to breathe and give your body an opportunity to rest.



### Easy Pose

Sit on the floor with your legs crossed, resting your hands on your knees with the palms facing up. If you like, you can let your thumbs touch your pointer fingers or just leave your fingers neutral. Sit with your back straight and breathe, focusing on deep inhalations and exhalations. You can stay in easy pose for as long as you like.



### Mountain

Stand with feet together. Ground down evenly through feet and lift up through the crown of your head. Lift your thighs and elongate your spine. Breathe easy.



### Tree

Start in mountain pose. Bend one knee, using hand to bring foot into upper inner thigh. (If this feels difficult, bring the foot to the shin below the knee, or use the wall for balance). Press into your standing foot, and lengthen up through the crown of your head. Be careful not to press the foot of your bent leg on your knee joint.



### Upward salute variation (half moon)

Start in mountain pose with your feet together and your arms at sides. You can stand with your feet shoulder-length apart if you have trouble balancing. Inhale and sweep your arms out to the side and then up overhead. Turn your arms so your palms face each other. Straighten your arms completely, but do not lock your elbows. Interlace your fingers and point your index fingers to the ceiling. Exhale as you press your left hip to the side and bend your upper torso to the right. Lift up and out through your whole spine and arms. Hold for five breaths, then inhale and come back to center. Then bend to the left, and then come back to center. Exhaling, sweep your arms back down to the sides of the body.

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### Hands to heart

Stand with feet together, shoulders back. Press your palms together and bring your thumbs to the middle of your chest. Hold and breathe for a count of ten.



### Chair

Start in mountain pose. Raise arms and reach up through fingers. Sit back and down as if sitting into a chair. Shift weight toward heels, and lengthen up through torso. Hold for a count of ten.



### Seated Twist

Sit on the floor with legs out straight, bend one knee and place that foot over the straight leg. Inhale. Exhale and twist your body toward your bent leg, placing the arm on the bent leg side on the ground behind you and the elbow of the opposite arm on the outside of your bent knee. Hold this posture for a count of five, straightening as much as possible toward the ceiling, then release and perform on the opposite side.

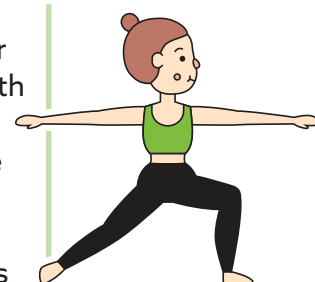
### Standing separated leg head to knee pose

Bring feet together and raise arms above head. Form steeple grip with hands and move right leg out 4 feet toward right. Turn right foot out 90 degrees and do same with torso, hips, arms, and head. Rotate left foot in about 45 degrees to keep hips squared forward. Tuck chin into chest and maintain straightened arms and legs and round down from hips until forehead touches right knee. If you feel strain on your back or legs, bend your right leg until your forehead touches your knee. Keep arms and left leg straight, and if you need balance, separate hands on floor.



### Warrior I and II

Start in mountain pose, bring hands overhead and press your palms together, then take a big step (about 3 feet) forward with your left leg and bend it to a 90 degree angle. Keep back leg straight, heel off of the ground. To proceed to Warrior II: Place the heel of the back foot on the ground and turn it out. Twist your torso to face the direction of your straight leg and at the same time reach arms out to shoulder height, shoulder blades down and palms wide, and gaze over the front fingers.



### Extended side angle

Start from Warrior II pose, exhale and lower your right arm so your forearm rests on your right thigh. Reach your left arm straight up towards the ceiling, and then extend your arm over the top of your head. Turn your head to look up at the ceiling. Keep your breathing smooth. If you are able, you can lower your front hand to the floor, placing your palm next to the inside arch of your front foot.





### Camel

Kneel with shins hip-distance apart. Rest hands on the back of your pelvis. Press down strongly into shins and lift up through the torso. Lift chest up as you stretch arms back to reach hands to heels. (To modify, curl toes under so you don't have to reach as far).



### Halfway Lift

Start in a standing forward bend, then place your fingertips on the floor next to your feet or place your palms to your shins with your fingers pointed straight down. Inhale, straighten your arms and lift your chest away from your thighs. Lengthen your spine and engage your upper back muscles slightly. Look slightly forward but don't strain your neck. Release.



### Standing Forward Bend (Fold)

Stand up straight with your feet hip width apart and arms by your sides. As you inhale, raise your arms over your head, then "swan dive" forward, bending at the waist, until your body is folded in half. Either place your hands on the floor or grasp your opposite elbows, and hang out here taking slow, deep breaths for up to a minute. To come out of the pose, slowly lift up, one vertebra at a time, lifting your head up last

### Rag Doll

If possible, with your knees straight (if you can't knees bent is okay), bring your palms or finger tips to the floor slightly in front of or beside your feet, or bring your palms to the backs of your ankles. If this isn't possible, cross your forearms and hold your elbows or allow arms to hang. Press the heels firmly into the floor and lift your bottom toward the ceiling. Hold for a count of ten. Slowly lift up.



### Cow

Start on all fours, slowly exhale and as you do round your back, pull your belly button toward your spine and bring your chin to your chest. Release and inhale



### Cat

Start on all fours, slowly inhale and arch your back, gaze toward the sky (don't strain your neck) and pull your shoulder blades together. Release and exhale.



### Relax

Lie face up, separating legs and letting feet fall apart. Place arms along sides, palms facing up. Close eyes and breathe easily. This is a resting pose and you can remain in it for several minutes.

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### Sleeping Hero

Start upright on your knees with them gently apart, so you can place your bottom on the floor. Exhale and lower your back torso toward the floor. If you're not able to do that, your body might not be ready for this pose. Respect your knees: don't push it if it hurts! If you can get into this position, slowly lean backward, coming on to your elbows. If you're comfortable there, lower your body down. The deepest version of this posture is when your back is resting on the floor or you can use a pillow underneath your back for support. Relax here for up to one minute, taking deep breaths.



### Child

Start on your hands and knees, exhale slowly and bend forward, lying your torso on the floor between your bent legs. Bring your arms to lie next to your torso, palms up. This is a resting pose; you can stay in the pose from 1 to 3 minutes, depending on your comfort level.

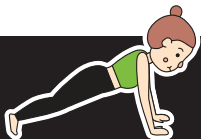


### Bow

Lie face down, and then lift chest, arms, and legs off the floor. Bend knees and reach back to grab outer ankles. Lift toes toward the ceiling, spread and lift chest.

### Downward Facing Dog

Come onto your hands and knees, and on your next inhale, straighten your legs, so your body forms an inverted V. Let gravity pull your heels toward the ground, and leave your neck in a neutral position. You can hold downward dog for 10 deep breaths or up to five minutes! Start out with what's comfortable for you, and work up to holding the pose for a bit longer as you practice more.



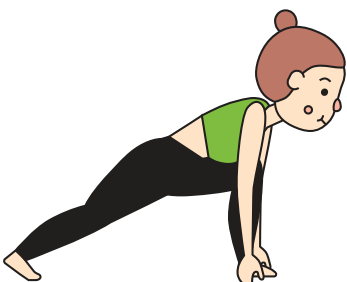
### Plank

Begin in push up position, making sure your arms are directly over your shoulders and your back is flat. Press your shoulder blades back. Strengthen your abdominal muscles and hold for 30 seconds.



### Cobra

Lie face down on the floor; place your hands flat on the floor next to your shoulders (your arms will be bent at your elbow). Press the tops of your thighs and feet to the floor, inhale slowly and begin to straighten your arms and bring your chest off of the floor, hold and breathe for 30 seconds, then return slowly to the floor.



### Lunge

Stand upright, bend your knees and, with an inhale, step your left foot back toward the back edge of your mat, with the ball of the foot on the floor. Step back far enough so that your right knee can form a right angle. Lay your torso on your front thigh and lengthen it forward. Look forward and place your hands next to your forward foot. Exhale and step your right foot back beside the left. Repeat the above instructions, but reverse left and right.