

Iyengar Yoga for the Respiratory System

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Overview

The following sequence maintains a healthy respiratory system. It may also be practiced when the respiratory system is compromised due, for example, to the Covid-19 virus. If the symptoms are severe, practitioners should avoid the poses indicated. The order of the poses is not written in stone and can be varied and/or the sequence can be truncated.

Inversions are essential. They promote circulation and benefit all the body's systems, especially the lymphatic system. In general, the lymphatic system rids the body of toxins and waste, and it transports infection-attacking white blood cells to where they are needed. When the system is compromised, it can result in glandular swelling, inflammation in the arms and legs, recurring infections, and an otherwise weakened immune system. Inversions reduce inflammation and help to keep the system moving.

The organs of the lymphatic system are the thymus, spleen, and lymph nodes. The thymus is a primary lymphoid organ and is in the upper front part of the chest directly behind the sternum and between the lungs. T cells mature in the thymus and these are critical to fight foreign invaders. The spleen sits to the left of the upper abdomen. It recycles old red blood cells and stores platelets and white blood cells. The white blood cells defend and protect the body against infectious disease. The lymph nodes are found throughout the body and are important for the proper functioning of the immune system. They are particularly concentrated in the neck, arm pits, the upper thighs and groin, the abdomen, and between the lungs.

In advanced cases, Covid-19 settles in the upper and then the lower respiratory system and mucus builds up in the lungs. If you are experiencing a cough and mucus buildup, **pranayama is contraindicated**. It should be avoided until the mucus dries up and you have recovered. The asana practice presented here may aid in drying up the mucus and augment recovery.

When breathing is compromised, it is important to include prone poses, that are face down, and not limit

the sequence to supine postures. In the supine poses, even though it may feel good at first, the chest may collapse after a little time and breathing can be compromised. As you will see in the sequence, the supine poses have extra focus on lifting the back chest up into the body to maximize the opening of the chest, from back to front, so the chest does not cave in. By contrast, in prone positions there is greater freedom for the intercostal muscles of the back wall of the chest to enable better "back breathing" and to facilitate improved breathing, in general. Both positions are essential to enhance respiratory function.

These points are supported by a recent observational study of individuals with acute Covid-19 disease. Patients who were not placed in a prone position exhibited "persistent poor recruitability" of lung tissue essential to respiration. Conversely, the study concluded that "alternating body position between supine and prone positioning" resulted in "high recruitability" of essential lung tissue and better overall respiration.¹

The sequence below thus features prone as well as supine poses. "Back-breathing" will be indicated, essentially, when the chest is facing the floor. In the supine poses, the focus is on relaxing the diaphragm and the entire abdominal cavity, while maximizing the chest cavity like a "big chest box." I suggest props that can improve respiratory function in both positions. If available, use additional props to support the upper and lower chest to enhance the beneficial effects.

In all the poses, relax the breath and let it be normal. If the breath is not reaching very well to the places described, a slightly deeper inhalation can be attempted, but not continuous deep breathing. Let the breath be relaxed and normal.

Practice according to your capacity. Long term, capable practitioners should hold the pose for the longer suggested time. The blood ordinarily circulates three times through the body every minute and each pose in this sequence improves circulation of the blood (as well as the lymph). The longer holds thus mean more blood circulation throughout the

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1. Chun Pan, Lu Chen, Cong Lu, Wei Zhang, Jia-An Xia, Sklar, Michael C., Bin Du, Brochard, Laurent, Haibo Qui. Lung Recruitability in SARS-CoV-2 Associated Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome: A Single-center, Observational Study. *Am J Respir Crit Care Med*; 2020; as 10.1164/rccm.202003.

Please refer to my books for knee, low back, neck and shoulder problems when the poses below are not attainable as shown and alternative set ups are needed.

body and more improvement in the health and vitality of all the systems of the body.

In times of stress, the sympathetic system is dominant, and the “flight or fight” response is triggered. If stress is chronic, the circulatory, lymphatic, respiratory, and other bodily systems become imbalanced, are weakened, and health is compromised. With yoga practice, the parasympathetic system, the relaxation response, becomes dominant. This is the gateway to health. This sequence helps promote the dominance of the parasympathetic system.

Please refer to my books for knee, low back, neck and shoulder problems when the poses below are not attainable as shown and alternative set ups are needed. Also refer to my book, *Geeta S. Iyengar’s Guide to a Woman’s Yoga Practice* for Samaashrayi and Upaashrayi seated poses (also known as L-Shapes, pp 70–75). These poses are good for fever, especially when done forward, upright, and then back, in succession. Practice the menstrual and post-menstrual sequences in *Geeta’s Guide*; these sequences are also good for stress reduction and building the immune system. The forward bends in these sequences should be practiced with the head and torso elevated for the respiratory system. My *Iyengar Yoga Cancer Book* also has many L-shape variations (pp. 24–29) and variations of supine poses to practice when unwell. These books also include more detailed explanations of these poses.

Herewith is the practice for the respiratory system and beyond.

1 | Adho Mukha Virasana | Downward Facing Hero’s Pose

Support the buttocks and head with a folded blanket and the torso with a bolster. Rest the forehead on the forearms or hands (FIGURE 1). Widen and spread the collar bones and sternum. Relax the abdomen. Allow the brain to rest



towards the forehead. Soften the mouth cavity. Observe the breath in the back chest. On the normal exhalations, release the intercostal muscles from the back to the front body and continue to breathe in and out of the back chest.

Hold three to ten minutes.

This pose is very quieting to the mind and body and is a good starting point for practice. Observing the breath in the back is very easy in this position. This position may be contraindicated for those with knee pain. Use the same set-up for the next pose.

2 | Parsva Adho Mukha Virasana | Side Downward Facing Hero’s Pose

Place the bolster in front of or slightly on top of the right knee. Re-fold the blanket into a three-fold to support the forehead so it does not restrict the arms. Bend over the right leg with the torso centered on the thigh. Reach the hands to hold the end of the bolster and extend the arms and sides of the torso evenly. Slightly step the left knee to the left to further open the groin and soften the abdomen on that side (FIGURE 2). Observe the breath and despite the asymmetry of the pose, evenly breathe in and out of both sides of the back. Additionally, lateral breathing will be less on one side. Bring the breath to the side walls of the chest equally.

Hold for three to five minutes, then bring the left knee back in, and repeat bending over on the left side, stepping the right knee slightly to the right. Return to the center to prepare for the next pose.

By doing this pose on one side and then the other, the practitioner stretches both kidneys, the liver, and the spleen. The actions also open and stretch the armpits and create space for the lymphatic nodes in the armpits.



3 | Parivrtta Adho Mukha Virasana | Revolved Downward Facing Hero's Pose

Remove the bolster from the previous pose. Reach the left arm perpendicular to the torso. Press the right hand on the floor near the right knee to lift the right shoulder up and release the left side of the back down. Align the ears parallel to the floor on a block (FIGURE 3).



FIGURE 3

Hold one to three minutes; then repeat on the other side.

This pose “squeezes” then “soaks” the spleen, kidneys, and liver. It also increases the flexibility of the intercostal muscles to facilitate better breathing.

4 | Adho Mukha Svanasana | Downward Facing Dog Pose

Stand at a rope wall. Have a chair nearby to transition from this pose to the next. Place the lower rope over the head and down to the top of the thighs. Step forward until the rope is taut. Bend over and reach the arms forward and step the heels back to the wall. Extend the heels back and down on the wall to touch the floor or as close to the floor as possible. Support the head on one or more blocks. Have just the forehead on the block so the eyes and nose are clear of the support. Reach the armpits forward and the inner top thighs back—to stimulate the lymphatic nodes that congregate in these areas. Extend the arms straight, lock the elbows; extend the legs straight, lock the knees. The complete extension of the arms and legs lengthens the upper and lower spinal column and elongates the abdomen, thus stimulating the lymph nodes in the abdomen. Continue to extend the legs back and arms forward. The ribs of the front body should not push beyond the skin. The skin of the back body should go slightly away from the ribs. This will expand and stretch the chest and lungs.

Stay in this pose one to five minutes (FIGURES 4A & 4B). Use the rope for the next pose.

This pose is an inversion, as well as a back extension, and a forward extension. It is an activating, yet calming, pose. The chest expands and creates an optimal environment for the breath.



FIGURE 4A



FIGURE 4B

5 | Ardha Uttanasana | Half Intense Stretch Pose

From the previous pose, step the feet forward until the legs are perpendicular to the floor. Fold the arms to Baddha Hastasana on the seat of the chair and rest the forehead on the forearms. Relax the back of the head/brain towards the forehead. Straighten the knees completely to firm the thighs. The more the thighs are tightened, the more any strain on the hamstrings is diminished (FIGURE 5A). If the hamstrings and hips are very tight, remove the rope and



FIGURE 5A



FIGURE 5B

place the buttocks against the wall with the feet one to two feet away from the wall. Go slightly wider with the feet and turn the toes further inward. Add one to two bolsters to the seat of the chair (FIGURE 5B). Bring the normal breath to the back body/lungs.

Hold for one to five minutes.

This pose lengthens the spine to help balance the central nervous system and quiet the mind.

6 | Prasarita Padottanasana | Spread Foot Intense Stretch Pose

Position two chairs on a sticky mat with the seats facing each other and one to three bolsters (depending on the body size) horizontally stacked on top of the seats. Place the abdomen on the bolster and step the legs wider apart until the sacrum is spread. Place the hands on blocks and gaze forward with the eyes parallel to the floor (FIGURE 6A).

Hold one to five minutes.



FIGURE 6A

The torso support is soothing on the kidneys and encourages back body breathing. The eyes get soft and tension is reduced. Supporting the front body makes you feel secure and calm.

To further quiet the mind, repeat the pose with the hands and head down (FIGURE 6B) and/or hold the ankles (FIGURE 6C). Position the head further back towards the heels and more towards the back part of the top of the head. Let the back of the head, the occiput, release towards the floor. Allow the diaphragm to move towards the back.

Hold for one to three minutes.

When the back part of the top of the head is on the floor and the occiput is released down in this variation, it fosters a “cooling effect” on the central nervous system, the brain, and the eyes. The body and the mind become quiet.

If suffering severe viral symptoms, go to Prone Savasana (see Figure 21) to finish the practice.

7 | Adho Mukha Vrksasana | Downward Facing Tree Pose

Extend the arms and legs as straight as possible. Release the head and neck (FIGURE 7).

Hold this pose 20 seconds to one minute.

Going topsy turvy is important when the world is upside down. This pose is invigorating and can relieve anxiety and depression. The chest is fully expanded. Include this pose to maintain health. It also builds up the muscular system—when unwell, avoid.

Going topsy turvy is important when the world is upside down.



FIGURE 6B



FIGURE 6C

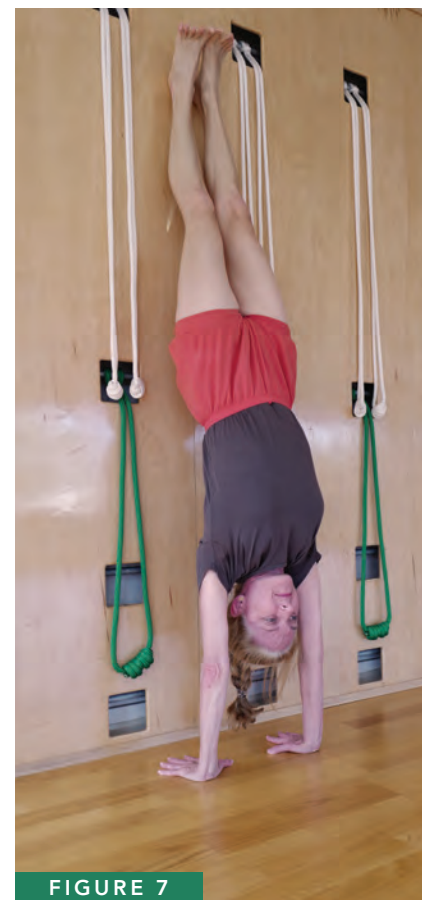


FIGURE 7

8 | Salamba Sirsasana I | Supported Head Balance Pose

Again, emotionally, when your world has been turned upside down, and you go upside down, it can turn your world right side up.

If feeling well, practice this pose for three minutes, and if comfortable, for up to ten minutes to keep the systems strong (FIGURE 8A). Come down before discomfort arises.

If the head and neck are not able to sustain the classic pose comfortably, use two chairs to support the shoulders. Position the chairs on a sticky mat horizontal to the wall with the seats of the chairs facing each other. Place sticky mats and folded blankets on the seats. The chair seats should be as close as possible for the shoulders to be supported up to the neck. The neck has to “slip in” from the front of the chairs. Go up one leg at a time. The legs can be apart to spread the pelvis and give space and expansion for the lymph nodes in the upper inner thighs. The backs of the hands may rest on the seat of the chair with the elbows out to the sides (FIGURE 8B) or hold the hands for more comfort (FIGURE 8C). You can alternate between these two arm positions.

When unwell, do rope Sirsasana with the arms to the sides on the floor (FIGURE 8D). Alternatively, or in addition, extend the hands up to hold the lower ropes (FIGURE 8E). This will widen and spread the sternum and chest, and increase circulation in the lymphatic system in a soothing way. This alternative creates a sense of freedom and different openings in the upper body. If no rope wall is available, repeat Adho Mukha Svanasana or Prasarita Padottanasana.

If there are neck and shoulder issues, refer to my book *Iyengar Yoga Therapy: The Neck and Shoulders*, for more alternatives.



FIGURE 8A



FIGURE 8B



FIGURE 8C



FIGURE 8D

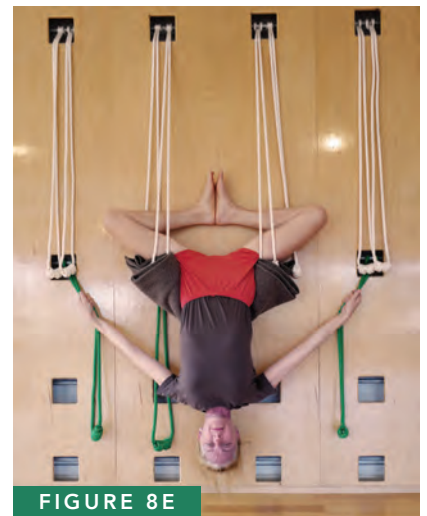


FIGURE 8E

9 | Viparita Karani Sirsasana | Going to Reverse Head Pose

Place a chair approximately one foot from a wall with the back facing the wall. Trial and error will reveal if there is a need to position the chair closer to or further from the wall. Place a folded sticky mat on the seat of the chair with one or more folded blankets on top. Place a blanket on the floor in front of the chair. Sit backwards in the chair with the hands holding the sides of the chair. Lower the top of the head to touch the blanket lightly. Avoid jamming the head and neck. Step the feet up the wall with the knees bent and the shins parallel to the floor. It is important for the legs to be bent at a right angle with the knees over the hips to achieve an ideal length and softness to the abdomen. Use the leverage of the hands gripping the chair to lift the back

chest (FIGURE 9A). If comfortable, interlock the hands behind the head as in Salamba Sirsasana I, maintaining the lift of the back chest as far as possible. If the hips and hamstrings are open, extend the legs straight up (FIGURE 9B). If the abdomen becomes hard, return to bent knees.

This pose may also be done on the Viparita Dandasana bench, and the bench is quite superior to using the chair. Try the pose without using a sticky mat. The hardness of the bench helps to lift the back up into the body and stimulates the circulation to the organs in the chest cavity. The more the chest opens, the more the abdomen can flatten and release to the back body. The key is, when lying back on the bench with bent knees, to slowly go towards the head until the sacrum “catches” one of the rungs and holds the tail bone in position. Then raise the legs straight up. Relax the back of the hands on the floor with the elbows bent to the sides (FIGURE 9C) or alternate between this arm position and Baddha Hastasana arms to further generate quietness to the brain (FIGURE 9D). While Baddha Hastasana is very relaxing, it does narrow the collar bones and sternum, so this is better performed when healthy and the aim is to quiet the mind. Position the arms to the sides (FIGURE 9E) to horizontally spread open the chest.

Alternatively, practice this pose after Dwi Pada Viparita Dandasana on the bench (see FIGURE 15). Simply bend the knees and raise the legs up.

Hold this pose for up to ten minutes, comfortably, if possible.

Viparita Karani Sirsasana on the chair spreads and relaxes the diaphragm. It feels like the brain is getting a “bath.” On the bench, it is even better and hits the sweet spot.



FIGURE 9A

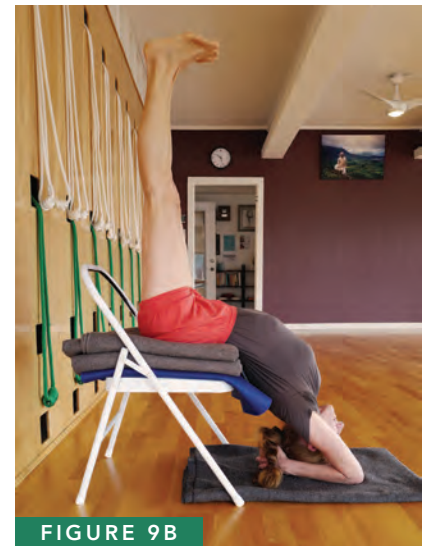


FIGURE 9B



FIGURE 9C

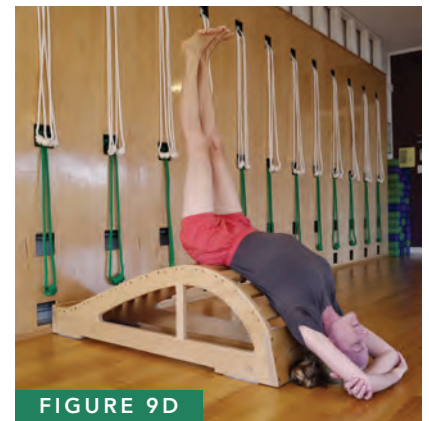


FIGURE 9D



FIGURE 9E

10 | **Supta Virasana | Supine Hero's Pose**

Use one or more bolsters vertical to the torso and a blanket for the back of the head. Position a slanting plank (or folded towel), with the thick edge towards the head, under the upper chest to support and lift the upper lungs. Extend the arms to the sides (FIGURE 10A). If there are shoulder issues, support may be placed under the arms to the height of the torso. Alternatively, interlock the hands and rest them



FIGURE 10A



FIGURE 10B



FIGURE 10C

(FIGURE 10B), then relax the arms (FIGURE 10C). The extension of the arms in this manner helps to stimulate the lymph nodes that congregate in the armpits. There are also lymph nodes in the elbow joints, and they too will be stimulated. Continue to hold the pose for another two to three minutes.

This pose may be contraindicated for practitioners with knee issues. Use the same props for the next pose.

11 | Supta Swastikasana | Supine Fortunate Pose

Continue to use the props as above with the legs crossed. If needed, position blankets under the thighs to support the femur heads. FIGURE 11 shows one three-folded blanket



FIGURE 11

on the front of the body. Spread the collar bones and sternum. After two to three minutes, move the plank to the bottom chest to lift and support the lower chest, lower lungs, and diaphragm. Move the plank lower than you think, all the way to the diaphragm. Reach the arms sideways. Extend the skin of the inner and outer armpits, elbows, and wrists

in front of the shins and under both knees with the slanting plank supporting the lower chest.

Hold each cross of the legs for three to five minutes.

Skip this pose if Padmasana can be achieved with comfort (see the next pose).

12 | Matsyasana | Fish Pose

Sit in Padmasana, crossing the right leg first, then the left over the right. If it is comfortable, then lie back on the bolster. Continue to use the supports as in the previous supine poses (FIGURE 12). If the body is healthy, do Uddiyana Bandha (lift the diaphragm high up and pull in the abdominal organs against the spine).

Hold for three to five minutes on each side.

This pose is superior in its effects to Supta Swastikasana because of the deeper opening in the hips and groins from Padmasana and the greater intensity that is brought to the length of the abdomen and opening and spreading of the chest from Uddiyana Bandha.



FIGURE 12

13 | Supta Baddha Konasana | Supine Bound Angle Pose

Continue to use the bolster to support the torso. Other supports to the chest can be tried. If a chumbal is available, position it on the center of the mid- to lower thoracic chest (FIGURE 13A). When lying back on the chumbal, the roundness of the support gives a circumferential openness in the chest cavity that is dramatic and powerful (FIGURE 13B). FIGURE 13C depicts a square foam positioned horizontally across the back chest. This spreads and lifts the back up and creates more awareness inside the chest. Place a belt on each leg as close to the hip and foot as possible to enhance the

effect of the pose on the organs, including the lymph nodes that congregate in the groins (FIGURE 13D).

Hold this pose for three to five minutes, longer if it is comfortable.

This pose is deeply and profoundly rejuvenating.



FIGURE 13A



FIGURE 13B



FIGURE 13C



FIGURE 13D

14 | Salamba Purvottansana | Supported Front Intense Stretch Pose

There are many ways to set up this pose. Two are depicted here. The first way uses chairs. Place the short end of a sticky mat to the wall and position two chairs, side by side, facing the same direction, at the opposite end of the mat. Place a folded sticky mat across both seats. Align the edge of one bolster to the side edge of the chair closest to the wall. Position a second bolster on top, stepped in about one foot. Place a block next to the bottom bolster to support the end of the top bolster. Place a folded blanket for the back of the head and a slanting plank (or other support used above) for the back chest. Sit on the bottom bolster, with the knees bent, and feet on the floor. Press the hands on the bolster to lift the chest and lie back. Step the feet to the wall (FIGURE 14A). To straighten the knees, avoid pushing the props and dropping the torso towards the legs. Instead, straighten the knees to augment the lift of the chest. Interlock the hands and rest them on the abdomen (FIGURE 14B).



FIGURE 14A



FIGURE 14B

The second way uses a viparita dandasana bench. Place the low end to the wall with a sticky mat in front of the bench. Position a four-folded sticky mat on the bench. Place three bolsters horizontally in a pyramid with a block and folded blanket for the head. Sit and lie back with knees bent (FIGURE 14C) and then straighten the knees towards the chest so it lifts further (FIGURE 14D). If you do this variation, use the bench for the next pose as well.

Relax everywhere. Observe the normal breaths. On the exhalations, release the diaphragm and abdomen towards the back. Maintain the trapezius to the waist and lift the back chest up into the back.

Hold this pose from five to ten minutes.

This pose and the next may be contraindicated for those who have back pain when bending backwards.



FIGURE 14C



FIGURE 14D

15 | Dwi Pada Viparita Dandasana | Two Footed Reverse Staff Pose

Sit on the viparita dandasana bench, facing the low end, with the knees bent. Sit closer to the low end. Lie back on the bench, then straighten the legs. Extend the arms to the sides on blocks or other supports that maintain the height of the arms in line to the shoulders (FIGURE 15A). The



FIGURE 15A



FIGURE 15B

bench, without a sticky mat or blanket, amplifies the lift of the chest and the relaxation response. The arms to the sides spread the collar and sternum bones and the chest. The lungs are fully expanded.

If a bench is not available, use a chair with a sticky mat and/or a blanket on the seat. The feet can be placed on the floor, or place them on the wall if back extension is minimal. Support the head and neck with one bolster on its side on top of a flat bolster. Hold the hands above the seat of the chair with the elbows below to get better leverage, and lift the back chest, spread and widen the collar bones (FIGURE 15B). The hands can also rest on the abdomen. The abdomen and diaphragm should be absolutely soft.

Hold for three to ten minutes.

This pose lengthens and stretches all the organs of the torso. The brain can become quiet. This pose may be contraindicated for back pain.

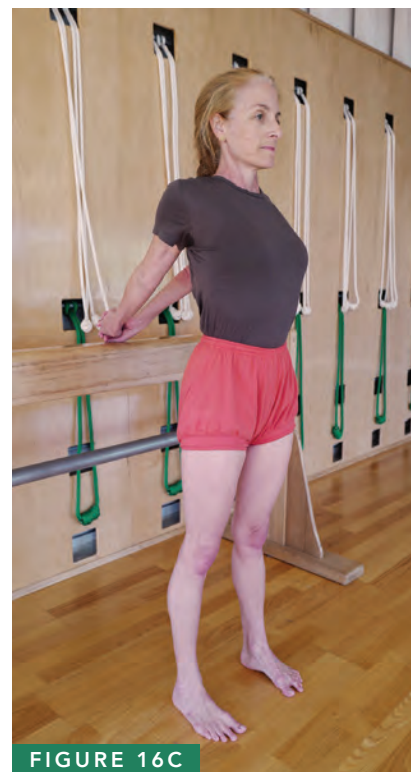
16 | Yoga Karunta 1 | Puppet or Rope 1

Center a chair between a set of ropes approximately two feet from the wall on a sticky piece or mat. Place a bolster(s) horizontally across the seat of the chair. Make “extensions” of the upper ropes. Fold two lower ropes in half twice and place them over the handles of upper ropes that are one set apart from the center set. Hold the ropes facing the palms to each other for ease and place the mid-thighs on the bolster. Turn the heels out, spread the back thighs, lift the skin on the upper front thighs and pelvis. Lift the chest forward and up. Spread the collar bones and widen the sternum. Maintain the buttocks down. If there are shoulder/neck/elbow issues, simply hook the arms at the elbow inside a set of ropes. Reach the forearms forward with the thumb up to the ceiling. No chair is needed (FIGURE 16B).

If ropes are not available, interlock the hands behind in Baddha Anguliasana (bound finger pose) and raise them up on a countertop (FIGURE 16C, shown with a trestle).

Hold for 20 seconds or more with repetitions.

This pose increases the elasticity of the intercostal muscles and opens the chest for optimal breathing.



17 | Halasana | Plough Pose

There are many variations of Halasana. One is shown here. Place a bolster with a blanket folded lengthwise stepped in one inch on top of the bolster. Position a halasana box (or chair) that is not too tall near the bolster. Place a sticky mat on top of the halasana box with a blanket on top. Position a rolled blanket to the edge that will be closest to the torso. Stand between the props. Place the hands on top of the bolster/blanket with the legs straddled (FIGURE 17A). Aim the shoulders (not the head) down on the bolster and





FIGURE 17B



FIGURE 17C



FIGURE 17D



FIGURE 17E

step the legs wider apart to Supta Konasana. The back of the head will not yet be on the floor (FIGURE 17B). Then step the legs up on the halasana box and rest the shins. Now the back of the head will be on the floor (FIGURE 17C). It is a choice to remain in this position for some time or continue to support the entire front thighs on the support with the hips against the box (FIGURE 17D). The legs will slant to the floor, which lifts the spine up and forward. This produces a very strong relaxation response.

Hold for three to ten minutes. Exit the pose by reversing the steps used to enter and come up to Uttanasana. Rest the back of the hands on top of the box for as long as desired (FIGURE 17E).

Halasana is quite a soothing and balancing pose for all the body systems. With respect to the respiratory system, the lungs are a bit compressed like a squeezed sponge in the front and lengthened in the back. The next pose, Setubandha Sarvangasana, the reverse takes place^{3/4}the “squeezing” is in the back chest and the lengthening in the front chest. The lungs can clear and open.

18 | Setubandha Sarvangasana | Bridge All Limb Pose

There are so many variations of this pose. The six-bolster variation is shown here. Stack the bolsters in twos and place two stacks together for the torso and one stack for the heels. A third bolster or blankets can be added to the heels to extend the back of the legs more and help with circulation. Place a blanket vertically across the two by two stack to “stick” them together. Fold a blanket lengthwise and place between the stacks to keep the body from dipping. If a foam square is available, that can be added as well. Place blankets for the head and arms. Sit on the two by two bolsters with the feet on the floor. Press the hands down, lift the chest, and lie back. Place the heels on the bolsters. Close the eyes and



FIGURE 18

deeply rest (FIGURE 18). Observe the breath and relax the abdomen on the exhalations.

Hold for three to ten minutes.

This pose benefits all the systems of the body. BKS Iyengar often referred to this pose as a “boon to humankind.”

19 | Salamba Sarvangasana | Supported All Limb Pose (Shoulder Balance)

Fold a sticky mat on the seat of a chair with one or more blankets on top, according to body size. Place a bolster on the floor in front of the chair. Add more height with blankets if needed. Sit backwards and lower the shoulders to the bolster and back of the head to the floor. Reach the arms inside the front legs to hold the back legs of the chair. Extend the legs straight (FIGURE 19A). Baddha Konasana legs can also be done in this pose (not shown) and will bring circulation to the lymph nodes in the groins.

For deeper work on the chest/lungs, let go of the back legs, bend the elbows, and pull the forearms forward towards the torso (FIGURE 19B). Lift the back chest, spread the collar and sternum bones.

Hold for three to ten minutes.



FIGURE 19A



FIGURE 19B

This pose is beneficial for the upper respiratory system. After recovery from illness, practice this pose twice a day to bring back lost vitality. See *Light on Yoga*, by BKS Iyengar, for a detailed description of this amazing pose and its beneficial effects.

20 | Viparita Karani Sarvangasana | Going to Reverse All Limbs Pose

The following set up is worth the extra effort. Position a sticky mat up to the wall, place two blocks vertical in a t-shape. Position a three-fold blanket about a little more than a bolster's distance from the block. Slant the bolster on the three-fold blanket without contact with the block. Place a second bolster on top, slanting down into and touching the block (FIGURE 20A). Add a blanket on top to have a softer base for the buttocks. Fold blankets for the head and shoulders. Use the upper ropes, and holding the handles, step the feet up on the wall one-by-one, bend the knees and lower the buttocks down the wall onto the set-up. One-by-one, hold the lower ropes to lift the back chest up and the front chest down as the shoulders are brought down. Forward rolling into the pose is also a good way to get in. Sitting sideways then raising the legs up the wall and shoulders down is possible, but a little more difficult to get into an ideal position. The arms can relax to the floor (FIGURE 20B) or can be positioned in line to the shoulders on blocks or blankets. The legs can also be spread apart hip-width for more aeration of the pelvis and groins (FIGURE 20C).

Hold for five to ten minutes.

Any body size can do the pose with these doubled props. The tailbone goes low and the back chest lifts high, which creates a remarkable softness in the abdomen, like a still lake. The front chest flows down towards the floor like a waterfall. The mind becomes completely quiet, present, and still.



FIGURE 20A

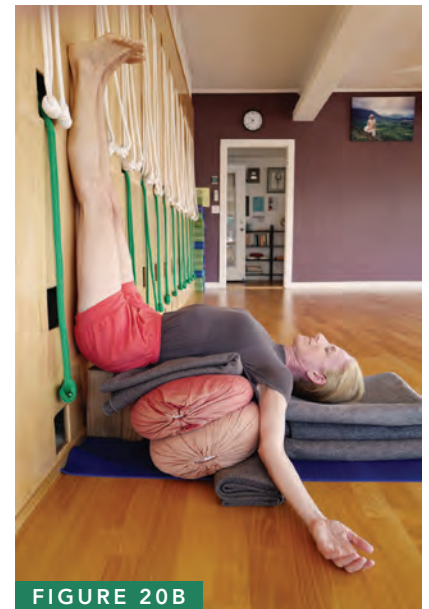


FIGURE 20B



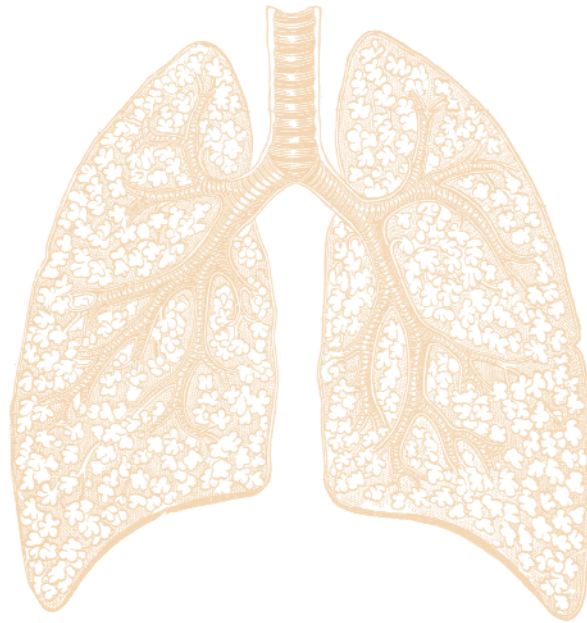
FIGURE 20C

21 | Savasana | Corpse Pose

Lie prone, face down, on a mat without any other support. Fold the hands under the forehead. Turn the toes in, heels out to the edges of the mat. The head and hands may be supported on a bolster with the elbows bent to the sides. A three-fold blanket under the abdomen may also be used.



FIGURE 21



Gratitude to Christine Havener, CIYT, Intermediate Senior 1, C-IAYT, who modeled the poses and gave great feedback; Iyengar Yoga SDC, Honolulu, Hawai'i, for the use of their studio; to Gretchen Wieshuber, Studio2D.com, for her graphic expertise; and to Tara Tubb and David Carpenter for their detailed editing. Also, to Tracy Thomas for last minute help.

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