

100+ YOGA POSTURES

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INCLUSIVE YOGA IMAGES

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Maja Miklič

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I. Foreword

“A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step” is a well known quote by Lao Tzu. Yoga is a path towards the inner self. It is more than a physical activity. When I practised yoga for the first time, I fell immediately in love with it. Yoga is about learning to accept the existing world and circumstances. Through yoga you are exploring by going deeper into the self. All the loose pieces of you are unified. It is about being conscious, alert and relaxed at the same time. It is sometimes called the best medicine, with 24/7 effects. It is not only the best, but is also always available. It requires discipline, but pays off. It is suitable for everyone who opens themselves up to it. I wish you lots of pleasure on your yoga journey and that because of it you may be healthy and happy.

*Namaste,
Maja*



II. Yoga and meditation

Yoga

The word yoga comes from “yuj” and it means a connection between two forces: body and mind – the individual soul with the universal soul. The origin of yoga lies in India and goes back thousands of years. Some say that yoga has existed as long as humankind has been on earth. Despite the fact that it is often linked to Hinduism, they are in fact not connected. Yoga is unique and can be practised by anyone, regardless of religion.

Yoga refers to the unification of the Individual Self with the Universal Self. The goal of yoga is to actively relax and to be active in a relaxed way. Yoga brings transformation, harmony and balance between one's emotions, body and mind. Through it, the body becomes more flexible, stronger and healthier. This enables you to experience more peace and clarity.

There are many more advantages to practising yoga. On the body level it improves flexibility, it strengthens the muscles, it increases the flexibility of the joints and it is healthy for the bone structure. It improves digestion, blood circulation and the immune system. On the level of the mind it brings more clarity, better concentration, inner peace, more energy and enthusiasm. On a deeper level you feel more connected to the inner self, become more aware and you feel more harmony. With regular yoga practise, both strength and elasticity of the body is developed simultaneously. Respect for the body and the training of your own will is essential. It is important to always listen to your own body and do the exercises according to your own judgement.

When in the posture, you come into contact with the energies within yourself. These energies can be blockages from the past, unsolved emotional issues, memories and so on. By practising yoga you slowly release these energies without adding extra “ballast”. Yoga asanas have a therapeutic and purifying effect.

Yoga and Ayurveda

Yoga and Ayurveda complement each other. Yoga is about the spiritual aspect and Ayurveda is more about the material aspect of life. Ayurveda is the most holistic medicine and its knowledge goes thousands of years back in the past. European, Asian, Arabic and other cultures have learned from it. The word “Ayurveda” means science and knowledge about life. It is an immense wealth of knowledge with very accurate methods to detect disorders in the body.

Yoga and Ayurveda are complementary. A healthy mind can only function in a healthy body. By eating healthily and committing to healthy habits, one can avoid illness. Good nutrition and healthy habits are essential to stay healthy. Food has an effect on our mind and the way we function in the world. Committing to the Ayurvedic lifestyle will make you stronger and more capable to deal with the life's challenges. According to Ayurveda it is better to prevent a disease than to cure it.

Yogic diet

Lots of people are not aware of the effects food has on the body and mind. Food affects our perception and expression. The right diet will make your body feel light and energetic. Whenever you eat unhealthy food, the body becomes lazy and tired. The right type of diet gives you energy and also deepens the spiritual experience. One can eliminate a disease just by following an appropriate diet and lifestyle. According to Ayurveda, well-chosen nutrition and healthy habits are essential to stay in good health. You need to take good care of yourself. Regular detoxing is also necessary.

Enrich your life with healthy nutrition, yoga, breathing exercises, meditation, enough rest, good sleep and regular massages. Eat lots of fruits and vegetables, nuts, grains and a small quantity of dairy products.

Hatha yoga

The word “hatha” means the sun (ha) and the moon (tha). The power of yoga is that everyone can practise it at his or her own level. It is the pre-eminent means to a happy, healthy and harmonious life. It is a popular way to relax and relieve stress. The techniques are attributed as having a beneficial effect on the nervous system, glands and other important organs. The goal of hatha yoga is to improve health and well-being.

Yoga is the fountain of youth

It has become quite common, accepted and normal to become sick when you get older. You suffer from back pain, headaches, joint pain and think that this is normal. This is not how it is supposed to be. According to Ayurveda, one's life span could be 100 years long. These days medical care is becoming more and more expensive, if not even non-affordable.

The best choice is to take good care of yourself and invest in your physical and mental health while you still have it. With years, your body can become more flexible and healthier.



Meditation

In the beginning, meditation is challenging. At first, we are bombarded with our own thoughts and feelings, which can lead to physical discomfort. Meditation is the cleansing of the mind. The more often one meditates, the easier it becomes to find peace. Thoughts and impressions are reduced after a while. The body gives less signs of discomfort. The meditator becomes more in touch with the inner self. This part of ourselves is timeless and peaceful.

Extended and uninterrupted deep meditation is the key to a full life of the nature of the self. Meditation makes it possible to experience unity at a deeper level. Feelings of ego and duality disappear. There are numerous kinds of meditation. It is best to find one that suits you. Regular meditation practice has many advantages. These are:

- it lowers blood pressure;
- it improves digestion;
- it stimulates the parasympathetic nervous system;
- it relieves headaches;
- it helps one sleep;
- it brings confidence and reduces fear;
- it helps against depression;
- it stimulates feelings of optimism and encourages a positive attitude.

Becoming aware of your thoughts

Sit with your back straight and keep your eyes closed. Place your hands on your knees, close your eyes and keep breathing through the nose. Become aware of your thoughts. Just observe how they come and go. They are like clouds in the sky. Accept them. Try not to go into the past or the future. Become aware of the present moment. After a few minutes open your eyes again. *Photo: page 12.*



III. Yoga practice

Yoga posture should be pleasurable

Yoga posture should be stable and pleasurable. When yoga posture causes pain, it is not yoga anymore. Nonviolence should be essential, not only as a theory, but also in practice. You should be especially gentle and careful with the joints. If you force yourself into some position and tense the muscles for too long, you are being violent. Adrenaline gets released into the bloodstream and causes you to become fatigued afterwards. If you practice yoga correctly, endorphins get released and you feel happy afterwards. Endorphins are the happy hormones. That is the reason why you feel high after a yoga practice. You could say that yoga is a free drug. All you need is some discipline and time. This investment in yourself will be richly rewarded. You will stay happy and healthy.

A short relaxation exercise between two postures

Take 1–2 full breaths in between. Breathe to your full capacity and feel the effect of the previous asana. Observe the sensations in the body. A short relaxation is good for the nervous system and it also recharges you.