

JALA NETI

JALA – WATER

NETI – CLEANSING OF THE NASAL PASSAGES

Along with Trataka and Kapalabhati, Jala Neti is one of the 6 Shat Karmas or Hatha Yoga purification techniques.

It is a traditional Yogic and Ayurvedic practice which cleanses the nasal and sinus passages by running lukewarm saline water through them. This practice is very simple, pleasant to do and has multiple benefits.

Benefits:

- Relieves nasal congestion
- Decongests and cleanses the sinuses
- Relieves hay fever
- Improves health of upper respiratory system
- Improves breath capacity therefore increasing vitality
- Improves sensitivity of the olfactory nerves, improving sense of smell
- Beneficial for eyes – flushes tear ducts, gives better vision
- Helps change mouth breathing to nose breathing by freeing the nostrils of mucous
- Destresses the mind and helps with depression
- Relieves sinus infections
- Helps sore throats, coughs, inflamed tonsils and adenoids
- Helps with asthma and bronchitis
- Builds immunity to allergies
- Beneficial for ears – ear infections and tinnitus
- Has a cooling effect on the brain
- Relieves headaches and migraines
- Improves mental clarity and wellbeing
- Improves concentration and visualisation
- Activates Ajna chakra thus helping our meditation practice

Cautions:

Ensure the amount of salt in the water is correct. It should be just right to the taste; not too much or too little salt otherwise it will sting the nostrils. Ideally the water should be non-chlorinated.

Many Westerners find this technique strange to begin with. When we voluntarily put salt water up our nose! However, it is one of the most valuable practices in Hatha Yoga because of its multiple health benefits both physical and mentally. It even helps with meditation.

The body's natural line of defense:

Firstly, there are the vibrating hairs at the entrance of the nostrils which filter impurities from the atmosphere.

The mucous lining covers the whole of the nasal passages from the tip of the nose to the throat and the sinuses. It is rich in blood vessels and is a filtering system which traps harmful particles from the atmosphere.

The sinuses are air filled cavities within the bony structure of the cheeks, behind the forehead and eyebrows, either side of the bridge of the nose and behind the nose directly in front of the brain. They are lined with the mucous membrane and cilia.

The cilia look like small hairs and is Latin for eyelash. They line the airways and are a mechanism for removing mucus, produced in the sinuses, to the back of the throat with a rhythmic beating action. Then it is either swallowed, coughed out or blown out through the nose. This action of the cilia stops the sinuses becoming infected with bacteria and pollutants.

This defense system is designed to prevent bacteria, dust and pollutants entering the body.

Jala Neti works by rinsing out these areas. Water flows up one nostril into the sinuses behind the bridge of the nose, where the air flows meet, and out of the other nostril. It is simple, pleasant and has many health benefits.

Olfactory bulb

The olfactory region is a neural body which transmits information about smell from the nose to the brain. It is responsible for the sense of smell and is situated in the forebrain at the top of the nasal cavity.

As we inhale through the nostrils, part of the breath flows over the olfactory bulb. Ancient yogis discovered that the olfactory region is responsible for the absorption of prana. It is our prana accumulator.

By cleansing the nostrils regularly, we are able to breathe in more air, stimulating the olfactory bulb and therefore, absorbing more prana.

This also has an effect on balancing Ida and Pingala energy. As discussed in the pranayama sections of this manual, we have seen how balancing the breath in both nostrils also balances the sympathetic (activation) and parasympathetic (relaxation) nervous systems which represent these two complementary yet opposing energies.

Some yoga teachers say that the olfactory bulb is the trigger point for Ajna Chakra. Therefore, Jala Neti aids the activation of Ajna. This will deepen our meditation practice.

Practice:

You will need a Neti pot and a glass of lukewarm salt water. Dissolve a teaspoon of sea salt into the water then taste it. The water should not taste too salty. If you can't taste the salt, then add a little bit more. Remember, it will sting the nostrils if the correct ratio of salt to water is not correct for you.

Pour the water from the glass into your Neti pot. Stand next to a wash basin or sink or do it outside.

Tilt the head forward and to the side. Insert the spout of the Neti pot into the tip of the nostril, Pour the water into one nostril and let it pour out of the other one. Repeat on the other side. See picture below.



This should feel pleasant. If it is uncomfortable, stop the practice and check with one of the tutors.

Once each side is enough.

When you have finished, slightly bend forward to release any last drops of water from the nostrils. Blow your nose very gently.

You can safely do this every day.

CHAKRA DHARANAM



DHARANAM = CONCENTRATION

We continue our exploration of the subtle body with Chakra Dharanam. This is a concentration practice using the chakras as a point of focus. It is a perfect preparation for meditation.

The main purpose of Chakra Dharanam is to create a free flow of prana in the chakras by removing energy blockages. Energy blockages in the chakras can affect us on all levels, causing problems in the body, mind and our personal life.

Each chakra has positive qualities which help us grow and transform. If a chakra is out of balance, we express the opposing negative quality e.g. if Mooladhara is imbalanced we feel fear and anxiety. A balanced Mooladhara chakra shows courage and stability.

Prana follows thought, therefore concentration on a chakra will give a gentle stimulation to the pranic flow. This unblocks the energy flow, energizes the body and calms the mind. Its benefits are also apparent in our day to day life.

Benefits:

Creates a balanced chakra system.

We become happier and more effective in the world.

Regulates negative emotions, transforming them to positive qualities.

Increases physical vitality and mental calm.

Cautions:

Always begin with Ajna centring as this draws up any negativity and neutralizes it.

Don't attempt to do the whole Dharanam practices in one session. Start at Mooladhara and work through the chakras slowly only practicing one a day.

For women, avoid Chakra Dharanam when you are menstruating, especially for the first 3 days. Also avoid in pregnancy.

AJNA CENTRING



This is an introductory practice and should always be done before practicing Chakra Dharanam.

Sit in a meditation posture of your choice and practice the Subtle Body Awareness meditation from Book 4 for a few minutes.

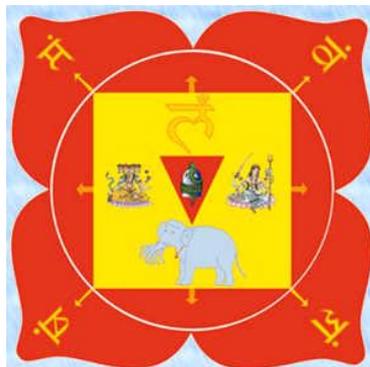
Then place the awareness at the tip of the nostrils and follow the breath up through the nostrils to Ajna Chakra on the inhale and on the exhale, follow the breath back down to the tip of the nostrils.

Repeat a few times.

Then gently hold your awareness at the Ajna centre, relaxing the eyes and surrounding area. You may notice this space expand and deepen as you feel the deep peace that Ajna brings.

Sit within the peace of Ajna for a few minutes then you are ready to move on to Mooladhara Dharanam.

MOOLADHARA DHARANAM



Mooladhara chakra, located at the base of the spine, is also known as the earth or base centre. The yellow square represents the earth.

The elephant is also present, representing Ganesh. He governs Mooladhara and removes our personal obstacles in life. These obstacles are often in our mind. Ganesh is said to protect us by standing at the doorway between the conscious and the unconscious mind.

He also reveals our strength and wisdom. Therefore, working with Mooladhara helps us to shift energy in order to achieve our personal goals.

Mooladhara is a powerhouse of energy. It is the seat of our dormant spiritual energy (Kundalini) and the source of the three main Nadis, Ida, Pingala and Sushumna.

Mooladhara is the foundation of the chakra system, similar to the foundations of a house. When the foundations are strong, the whole building is held steady and firm. Likewise, when the energy of Mooladhara is strong it supports the whole chakra system. It is connected to our survival mode and when we feel that is threatened, we experience fear.

In this practice, fear is transformed into courage. This allows us to move forward fearlessly in life and overcome obstacles to our goals, dreams and desires.

Mooladhara Dharanam

Sit in a meditation posture of your choice.

Steady the body with the Body Stillness meditation and be aware of the natural flow of the breath.

After a few minutes, practice the Subtle Body awareness technique and Ajna Centring.

Inhale and visualise the breath moving down to Mooladhara at the base of the spine and as you exhale, visualise the breath flowing down into the earth. Repeat until you really feel the connection with the earth.

Visualise you are sitting on a mountain and feel the power of the earth beneath you.

Continue to be aware of the breath flowing down to the base on the inhale and connecting with the earth on the exhale.

Now imagine that you are sitting upon a yellow square. Hold the image for as long as you can without forcing.

Then after a few minutes, visualise a radiant red light within Mooladhara.

Affirm 'I am filled with courage and I trust life'. Repeat the affirmation 3 times.

Sit in stillness for as long as you wish then come into Balasana with the forehead touching the floor for a few moments.

You will feel a spontaneous feeling of joy and peace as you connect with Mooladhara.

To enhance the grounding effect of Mooladhara Dharanam, you can also use the Prithvi mudra (see book 4.)

PRANAYAMA

KAPALABHATI – SHINING SKULL BREATH

KA-PAL-A-BAT-I

KAPALA – FOREHEAD

BHATI – LIGHT / PERCEPTION AND KNOWLEDGE

Note: This pranayama is for your personal practice only and NOT to teach until you have been practicing it regularly for 6 months.

Kapalabhati is a cleansing technique from the Shat Kriya system of Hatha Yoga. Where the emphasis is on the exhalation and repeated numerous times.

Benefits

Purifies all the systems of the body

Cleanses and strengthens the entire respiratory system

Increases vital capacity

Releases toxins

Improves circulation

Energises the brain and cleanses the frontal lobes

Massages the brain

Removes sluggishness

Relieves stress

Increases intellect, improves concentration

Calms the mind and helps to remove negativity

Purifies the blood with the extra oxygenation

Tones the diaphragm and abdominal muscles

Balances the metabolism

Increases stamina

Creates stillness in body and mind

Purifies the nadis.

Builds body heat by activating Manipura chakra

Increases subtle perception

Cautions and contraindications:

High or low blood pressure

Heart problems

Ear or eye problems

Diabetes

Abdominal pain

Abdominal hernia

Abdominal problems like gastric issues and IBS

Avoid during menstruation and pregnancy

Avoid for 3 months after childbirth.

Don't do late at night as this technique is very activating and may find difficulty in sleeping afterwards.

Avoid if you feel exhausted, perhaps better to lie down and practice complete yogic breath.

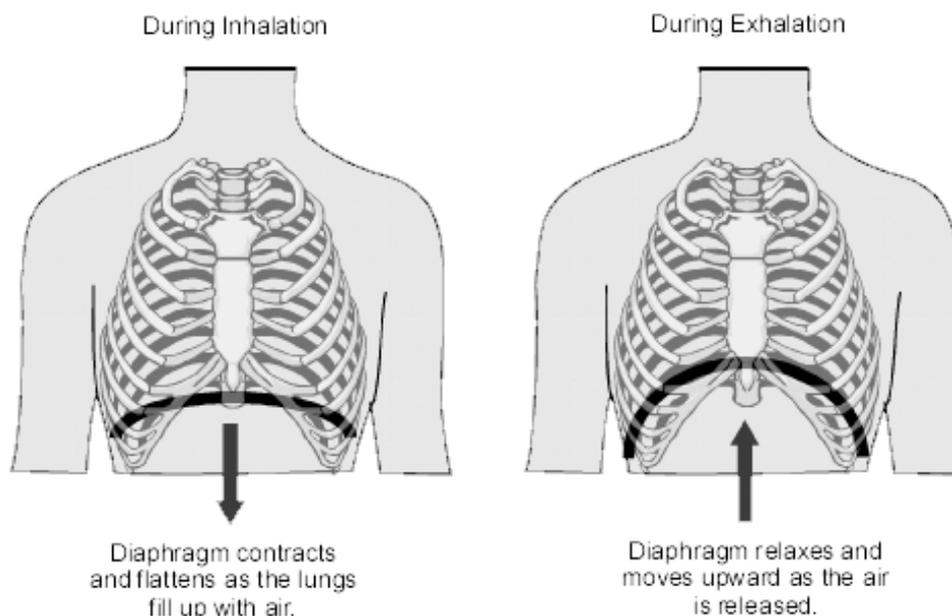
Wait at least 2 – 3 hours after eating before practicing. The stomach should be empty.

This Pranayama has innumerable benefits because of the purifying effect on the physical and subtle bodies. Kapalabhati means shining skull breath due to it cleansing the frontal lobes of the brain. It is said that with regular practice, the face shines with radiance.

In most pranayama techniques, the muscular control emphasis is on the inhalation and the exhalation is passive. In Kapalabhati this is reversed. The inhalation is passive and the exhalation is active. This makes the breath energizing, physically and mentally.

The exhalation is 'forced' and the inhalation happens of its own accord as an automatic reaction to the exhalation. This is an important point to understand because it means that we don't have to think about the inhalation at all. It just happens naturally.

The Hatha Yoga Pradipika describe the action of the lungs like a pair of blacksmiths' bellows. When the bellows are closed, the air is pushed out and when they are open, the air is sucked in due to a vacuum effect that is created.



When we breathe, the movement comes from the diaphragm. As we exhale the diaphragm moves up and as we inhale, the diaphragm moves down. The repeated movement of the diaphragm in Kapalabhati, creates a pumping action that stimulates and refreshes all the vital organs and sends fresh oxygenated blood through the whole body to all the body systems.

The breathing process provides a very gentle massage to the brain. There is a fluid around the brain called cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) which is responsible for cushioning and protecting it. When we inhale, this fluid compresses and the brain slightly contracts and when we exhale the fluid decompresses and the brain expands slightly.

During Kapalabhati the pumping action of the diaphragm causes an enhanced decompression and an extra massaging effect which both energises and stimulates the brain.

Kapalabhati energises Manipura chakra which controls dynamism. Prana is then moved up through Sushumna Nadi within the spine, through the chakra system to Sahasrara at the crown where it activates the brain centres responsible for deeper states of awareness.

The abdominal contractions cleanse the lungs of stale air and remove carbon dioxide and other

toxins from the body. The breath is pushed out of the nostrils as the diaphragm moves up into the thoracic cavity.

Every exhalation is dynamic and audible. It creates a sound that is clear and crisp. It is likened to the sound of sawing wood. Every inhalation is spontaneous and not controlled.

Stop immediately if any pain is experienced in the chest or sides of the torso. Usually this means the breath is being forced.

The breath is initiated by the contraction of the abdomen, if it feels there is too much pressure in the nostrils, the abdominals are not being contracted properly.

It is best to practice this first thing in the morning because of its energising effects.

Method

Before practicing the Pranayama, it is important to get the abdominal contraction right first.

Sit in a position of your choice for pranayama with the spine elongated. Take a few natural breaths.

Place both hands over the abdomen. One hand above the navel and the other below.

Direct the awareness to underneath the palms of the hands.

Inhale until the lungs are $\frac{3}{4}$ full.

Focus on the navel: exhale by expelling the air 'quickly from the lungs' by contracting the abdominal muscles in towards the spine in a quick and sharp movement.

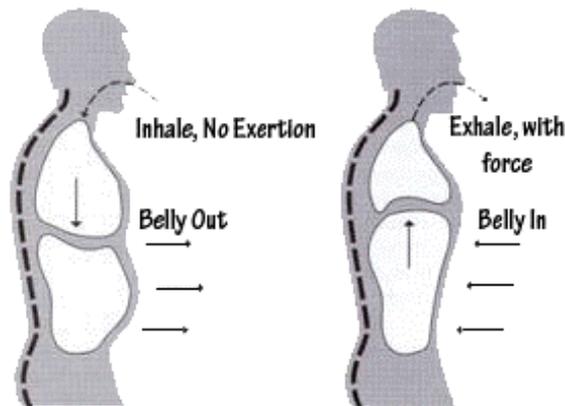
Immediately after exhalation the abdomen relaxes and a short, passive inhale occurs.

Do this a few times until you have understood the movement.

It is very important not to force the breath as it is a controlled muscular action.

Get used to the technique before moving onto Stage 1.

Kapalbhati Breathing:
Inhale - No Exertion, Exhale- with Force



Stage 1

Sit in the pranayama position of your choice with the spine elongated and chest open.

Close the eyes and settle yourself with a few natural breaths.

Inhale until the lungs are $\frac{3}{4}$ full.

Exhale by contracting the abdominal muscles quickly then immediately releasing them. Be aware of the spontaneous inhale.

Do 10 sharp contractions then relax and take 2 or 3 deep, slow, breaths as in Complete Yogic Breath. This is 1 round.

The contractions should be roughly 1 every 2 seconds.

Do 3 rounds. If that is too much, do less. If comfortable, increase slightly.

Focus upon Ajna Chakra for a few minutes then sit in stillness for as long as your wish.

Before you proceed to stage 2, make sure you have built up your practice of Stage 1 by adding 5 exhalations a week until you can do 20. Kapalabhati is a powerful practice and each individual student has different abilities, so do what is right for your metabolism. Don't overdo it. Take your time.

Stage 2

Increase the contractions to 1 per second.

Inhale until the lungs are $\frac{3}{4}$ full

Exhale by contracting the abdominal muscles quickly then immediately releasing them. Be aware of the spontaneous inhale.

Do 20 sharp exhalations then relax and take 2 or 3 deep, slow breaths.

Do 3 rounds

Focus upon Ajna Chakra for a few minutes then sit in stillness for as long as your wish.

As your stamina improves you can build up the number of contractions over time. Do not rush this as overdoing it can strain the abdominals, diaphragm and intercostal muscles (between the ribs). Better to take time and build up slowly. You will still get the same benefits.

In Kapalabhati it is important for the body to be steady. The torso and head should be totally still. Only the abdomen should move in and out.

Don't move on to stage 2 until you have mastered this steadiness. If you're not sure, try practicing in front of a mirror.

If you experience dizziness during the practice, it is because you are breathing too forcefully. Just sit quietly until it passes before continuing with less force.

Note: we describe the breath as 'forced' but this does not mean you leave your comfort zone. In pranayama only do what is comfortable, at all times. Never go into strain.

TRATAKA



The eyes are the window to your soul
William Shakespeare

TRATAKA = TO GAZE STEADILY
TRAT- AK

Trataka means 'to gaze steadily' and is a powerful concentration practice. It is the 5th of the Shat Karmas or Hatha Yoga cleansing techniques.

The Hatha Yoga Pradipika describes Trataka as 'Looking intently with an unwavering gaze at a small point until tears are shed'.

Benefits:

Purifies and strengthens the eyes

Improves vision and is said to correct eye problems including glaucoma and macular degeneration

Increases blood circulation in and around the eyes

Relieves headaches

Balances the autonomic and central nervous systems

Improves memory and concentration

Reduces stress

Cures insomnia

Develops intuition, increases willpower, enhances creativity
Awakens Ajna chakra
Activates Manipura chakra
Increases vitality
Increases subtle perception
Attunes us to the power of light.

Cautions:

Care should be taken to avoid straining the eyes. Gradually increase the time of practice.
Avoid in cases of psychosis and schizophrenia.
If you do have an eye problem, discuss this with an experienced teacher beforehand.
If sitting close to a flame, it is best to splash water into the eyes after the practice, to stimulate the blood supply.
Avoid rubbing the eyes.
Never do Trataka on the Sun unless it is at sunrise or sunset.

Throughout Hatha Yoga we find the 5 senses are used in many practices to focus the mind for meditation. In this practice we use the sense of sight to still the mind by gazing continuously at an object placed in front of us.

Sight is the most powerful of the 5 senses

We define our physical world through information given to us via the senses. Perception through hearing, touch, speech and smell requires us to be close to the source. e.g. in order to smell the fragrance of a flower, we have to be near to the flower. But with our vision, we can see things from a long way off, even miles away.

About 80% of information we receive from the outside world comes from sight and at least 40% of the brain is involved with vision and seeing.

How does Trataka work?

There is a unique relationship between the eyes and the mind. Our mental and emotional states are reflected in the movement of the eyes.

A restless and stressed mind creates erratic movement in the eyes. When the mind is relaxed and calm, the eyes remain steady. This has been proved scientifically with the use of an EEG machine which measures electrical activity in the brain.

There have been tests on the different stages of sleep e.g. when someone enters the dream state, the eyes move rapidly (REM state) and when they enter the deep sleep state, the eyes are still.

Intentionally fixing the gaze on one point induces a focused mind. Gazing steadily at a stationary object creates stillness of the eyes then mental calm naturally follows. After some time, thoughts slow down and eventually stop.

It is ideal to do before meditation but it is also a practice in its own right with numerous benefits

METHOD

Bahiranga Trataka - External concentrated gazing

A candle flame is the most popular object of concentration because when we close the eyes afterwards, it leaves an impression in the mind which is easy to focus upon.

In addition to a flame, a picture maybe used of a saint/spiritual teacher who inspires you, a black dot on a white background, a crystal, a flower, a Yantra (mystical diagram), the sky, the full moon, the rising sun or your shadow.

This is best done in a darkened room. Make sure the room is free from draughts so the flame doesn't flicker.

Place a lit candle at eye level about 3 feet in front of you. Traditionally this is about 1½ arms' length away, the main thing is to be comfortable. The distance should feel easy on the eyes and cause no strain.

Stage 1

Sit in a relaxed meditative posture of your choice with the spine elongated and the hands in Jnana mudra.

Softly close the eyes, relax the body and be aware of the natural breath.

When the body feels steady and the breath is relaxed, open the eyes and gaze at the centre of the flame just above the wick.

This is the brightest part of the flame. The eyes should be relaxed and the gaze, soft.

Keep focused on the flame and try not to blink. This may feel strange at first.

If the mind wanders, keep coming back to the practice.

Gaze at the flame until the eyes water or become tired.

The time it takes for this to happen varies greatly from person to person. Start with about 10 - 20 seconds and build up over time to about 2 - 3 minutes. Only do what is comfortable and without any strain.

Close the eyes and rest.

Rub the hands together and palm the eyes before finishing the practice.

Stage 2

Antaranga Trataka - Internal concentrated gazing

Repeat the instructions for Stage 1

Keep the eyes closed and an image of the flame will appear in the space behind the forehead.

Try to hold the image steady at Ajna chakra until it disappears. Keep the forehead and eye area relaxed.

Observe the colour and shape of the image.

When the image fades, gently open the eyes and repeat alternating between stage 1 and stage 2.

When the eyes become tired, finish the practice and allow the awareness to move into the Anahata chakra – heart centre.

Sit in stillness for as long as you wish.

Rub the hands together and palm the eyes for a few moments before opening them.

At first, it may only be possible to do this once. The important thing is that it is done at a pace which is right. Always stay in the comfort zone or the eyes may become strained.

Antaranga Trataka

Generally, internal focusing (Antaranga Trataka) is more difficult than external concentration (Bahiranga Trataka). When practiced with a candle flame it makes it easier as the image of the flame makes an imprint on the mind to form an after image.

Antaranga Trataka is solely a visualisation practice and the object of concentration should always be something inspiring and empowering to us. Concentrating on peaceful aspects of nature is ideal. You can use mental images like a calm lake, a flower, a Yantra (mystical diagram), the sky, the full moon, the rising sun etc. Never focus on a negative image.

Close the eyes and allow the image to manifest at Ajna chakra.

Relax the eyes and focus on the image. Do not worry if the image is not clear at first. It takes time. Relax and don't tense the eyes.

This can be done prior to meditation as it deepens your experience

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WARRIOR III**VIRABHADRASANA III**

(veer-ah-bah-drahs-ann)

Virabhadra = the name of a fierce warrior

Benefits: strengthens ankles, knees, hips, gluteus muscles, core and back. Brings strength and stability to the shoulders and arms. Develops awareness and stamina.

Contraindications: Knee hip and ankle problems.



It is important to prepare the hips, back and thighs before performing this posture

SET UP:

This description is for more advanced students. (see teaching notes for beginners and progression)

1. Stand in Tadasana, side on to the mat. Root down through the right leg, take the left foot back, toes touching the floor. Place hands to the hips to ensure alignment. Arms down to the side of the body.
2. Engage core and gluteus muscles. Fold from the crease of the groin tilt forward and raise the left leg from the mat. Strengthen into the quads and ensure the pelvic floor muscles are engaged.

3. Again. If possible, ensure the hips are square on. The left leg and torso parallel with the mat. (this is very unusual with beginners)
4. When steady and strong, bring the arms forward. Inside of the arms in line with the ears, palms facing each other.

To Exit: Lift upright and lower the left leg down. Return to Tadasana.

Repeat to the other side.

Teaching Notes to Virabhadrasana III (Warrior III):

This pose can be a great challenge for many.

It is important to prepare the hips, back and thighs before performing this posture.

There are many ways to make this posture accessible for beginners, or students who have less flexibility or hip issues.

If there are balance issues, students may come to the wall, or use the back of a chair.

- Face into the wall/chair, fingertips resting against it. Step back to the length of the arms. Keep the standing leg firm and strong, raise the opposite leg from the mat. Begin to lower the top half of the body down, if possible parallel with the mat. A lighter version would be to simply raise the leg slightly from the mat, without lowering the torso down, allowing the student to become familiar with standing on one leg, while folding forward.
- Ensure the standing foot is balanced and the leg is straight without locking the knee. The thigh and gluteus muscles are contracted.

Advancement:

Ensure the pelvis is in balance – do not fix it manually. Encourage the student to find that balance, even place a brick or block onto the pelvis, allowing them to feel the alignment. Some students take one hand behind to check the balance of their pelvis.

The back leg maybe placed on the wall, with the sole flat and toes pointing down, the chair can be placed at arm length and the hands come onto the back of the chair or the arms resting along it. Once confident the chair maybe taken away.

It is a case of building up the strength, stability and balance.

Releases Fear!! Builds confidence and stamina!

HALF BOW POSE
ARDHA DHANURASANA
 (ar-dah dan-oor-ahs-
 ann) Ardha = half
 Dhanu = bow

Benefits: strengthens spine.
 Stretches chest, abdominals, hip
 flexors and quads.

Contraindications/cautions:
 Back problems.
 Pregnancy, abdominal
 Surgery. Hernia.



SET UP:

1. Lie in a prone position, forehead onto the mat. Keep checking the pelvis is evenly balanced. Engage core, legs out straight, top of the feet onto the mat. Arms at the side.
2. Extend the left arm forward and place the palm of the hand on the floor. Walk the hands in two hand lengths by curling the fingers into the palm. Flatten the hand down. Bend the right knee and draw the right arm back, catch hold of the top of the foot. Thumb on the on the instep.
3. The pelvis remains balanced and core is strong. Inhale, push into your left hand, begin to lift the torso from the mat and simultaneously extend the right foot away from the buttocks.
 Draw the scapula slightly in towards the spine, ensuring the right side of the chest is open.

To Exit: Lower down, release the foot and bring both arms to the side of the body. Turn the head to one side, relaxing the neck.



Teaching Notes to Ardha Dhanurasana (Half Bow):

For beginners, strong backbends can be very difficult and unsafe to perform. If students have tight hips, a standing quad stretch maybe enough. Otherwise lie on one side and take hold of the foot behind the body, both sides.

BOW POSE
DHANURASANA
 (dan-oor-ahs-ann)
 Dhanu = bow

Benefits: Strengthens spine. stretches chest, abdominals, hip flexors and quads.

Contraindications/Cautions: Back problems. Pregnancy, abdominal surgery, hernia.



SET UP: As above for number 1.

1. Bend both knees and sweep the arms behind, palms on top of the feet, fingers facing into the instep and thumbs on the soles
2. Ensure the core muscles are engaged. Pelvis is anchored into the mat, feel the sit bones being drawn towards each other. Inhale push into both hands whilst simultaneously drawing the feet away from the hips. Draw the scapulae towards each other, thus lengthening the neck. Ensure the thighs do not splay out, or the chin lifts towards the ceiling.
3. Breathe evenly using Ujjayi breath.

To Exit: Lower down, release the feet and arms along the side of the body. Turn the head to one side, allowing the neck to relax

Counter pose: Utthita Balasana, into full Balasana, or one fist on top of the other, forehead resting onto them.

Teaching Notes to Dhanurasana (Bow):

Encourage beginners to stay at Ardha Dhanurasana until backbends are safe and core is strong.

Props can be used in the form of straps, two straps maybe used, looped onto the soles and taking hold with each hand raise legs up and keep extending through the feet.

Another option is – using the buckle, loop the strap to prevent it slipping! Take the strap beneath the arms and the opposite end loops beneath the feet, ensure the side of the straps are held, with arms extended - to prevent slipping out of the harness.

Another variation is on the photos below, rolling to one side and the other.

In Pairs:

One student lies prone, facing the head, the other stands across the body, feet in line with the hips. Once the student doing the pose brings the arms behind, the other catches hold of wrists and both link in this way. The support student bends both knees (engages core, keeping the back straight and strong). Keep hold of each other and slowly begin to raise the partner from the mat to a level which is right for them.

Ensure neither are straining.

To Exit: lower the partner down slowly. Once on the mat, either head to one side, or come into Makrasana.



STANDING HALF MOON POSE

ARDHA CHANDRASANA

(ar-dah chan-drahs-ann) Ardha = half

Chandra = moon, glittering, shining

Benefits:

Strengthens spine, abdominals, buttocks and legs. Opens across the chest and shoulders. Improves balance.

Contraindications/cautions:

Low blood pressure



SET UP:

1. Stand in Tadasana, step out into a wide stance.
2. Come onto the ball of the right foot and rotate to 90 degrees. Ensure the heel is in line with the centre of the back foot.
3. Strengthen through the legs and engage core. Raise the arms out in line with the shoulders, palms facing down. Either come from Warrior II or Triangle and gaze down to the right foot. Follow the line roughly the length of that foot again and place the thumb ahead
4. of the foot, in line with the little toe, fingers facing forward.
5. The back leg raises in a simultaneous movement as lowering to the floor, the inside of the thigh parallel to the floor. Point the toes.

6. The upper arm is extended towards the ceiling, palm facing in the same direction as the torso. Back of the neck in line with the spine.

To Advance into a Chapasana – bend the top leg and catch hold of the foot. Extend the arm away from the body.

To Exit: Look down, bend the knee on the supporting leg, bring the back leg down wide onto the mat.

Counter pose: Wide angle forward bend.



Teaching Notes to Ardha Chandrasana (Half Moon Pose):

The use of props are beneficial to help with flexibility, stability and balance.

Options: Using the wall is essential for beginners, this helps with correct alignment and balance.

Lean side onto the wall, have a brick placed in the position where hand would be. As the back leg raises, the hand lowers onto the brick.

Initially come in and out of the pose, perhaps only getting used to raising the back leg from the mat.

Once comfortable within the pose, lean slightly into the wall, simultaneously raising the arm and leg, lower down towards the mat.

To exit: It is essential in poses off and on the wall that the raised leg lowers out wide, at the same time as the hand is raised from the floor.

Avoid locking knees or rotating the supporting leg inward. Ensure the standing foot is pointing forward.

Shoulders lower down from the ears, creating a long neck.

SEATED WIDE ANGLED FORWARD BEND

UPAVISTHA KONASANA

(oo-pah-veesh-tah con-ahs-ann) Upavistha = seated
Kona = angle

Benefits: strengthens the quads, and core. Opens the hips. Lengthens legs, torso and arms.

Contraindications/cautions: Tight hips and hamstring muscles, lower back problems. Pregnancy



SET UP: A very strong seated forward bend NOT FOR BEGINNERS (adjustments maybe made)

1. Sit in Dandasana. (a block maybe used).
 2. Separate the legs wide, turning the thighs slightly outwards so that the knees point up towards the ceiling. Place hands on the floor behind the buttocks, lifting out of the hips, without strain, legs may separate wider.
1. Inhale, raising arms towards the ceiling, ensure lifting out of the hips. Engage core and folding from the crease of the groin, extend through the torso and along the arms to the fingertips.
 2. Strengthen through the legs, extending through the heels.
 3. Exhale and surrender towards the floor. Keeping the neck in line with the spine. Palms may touch the floor.

Using ujjayi breath relax into the pose.

To Exit: Inhale when reaching forward, stay steady into the hips, strengthen core, legs and pelvis. Raise the arms and the torso into an upright position.

Teaching Notes for Upavistha Konasana (Seated Wide Angle Forward Bend):

Avoid bending forward from the waist, ensure the movement is a fold from the hips. Do not force the torso towards the floor.

Options: Bend the knees, arms extended with fingers onto the floor in front of the chest, lean forward and lengthen through the spine.

Still keeping knees bent: Arms may link beneath the legs. Continue as above for the exit. Reach forward and lift up towards the ceiling, lower the arms down with the outbreath.

