

Coordination of breathing and bodily movements

The following exercises develop harmonious coordination of the breathing and bodily movements in an almost playful way and prepare you for more challenging exercises.

These exercises are very helpful for the untrained, for seniors and for people with medical conditions (after consulting their physician or the yoga teacher).

Even without practising other exercises, the following sequence will benefit the body and calm the mind

Some standing posture exercises are suitable for those needing to sit on a chair instead.

1. Welcome

- Starting position: Mountain posture (standing straight, feet together or a little apart, arms relaxed by the sides of the body).
- Raise the stretched arms in front of the body and bring the palms together (Figure 1a).
- While breathing in spread the arms sideward (Figure 1b).
- While breathing out bring the palms together again.
- **Do this five times** slowly, continuously and synchronously with the breathing rhythm.



Figure 1a

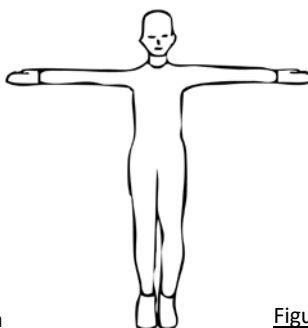


Figure 1b

2. Hands stretch breathing

- Starting position: Mountain posture (standing straight, feet together or a little apart, arms relaxed by the sides of the body).
- Interlock the fingers and place them on the chest. Relax the shoulders (lower them) (Figure 2a).



Figure 2a

a) 90° - horizontal

While breathing in stretch the arms forward to shoulder level and twist the hands, palms facing outward.

Stretch the arms completely without exerting too much effort (Figure 2b).

While breathing out reverse the movement. Place the hands on the chest and relax the shoulders (**repeat three to five times**).



Figure 2b

b) 135°

Do the same exercise but raise the straight arms an additional 45° above the horizontal plane.

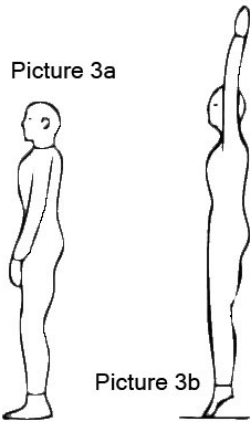
c) 180° - vertical

Do the same exercise but raise the straight arms to the vertical, hands above the head. Keep the hands close to the nose when moving the arms up and down.

- Coordinate the movements of the arms and hands and pay attention to breathing during the entire exercise.
- Return to the starting position and be aware of the changes of the breathing and the sensation in the arms, shoulders and neck.

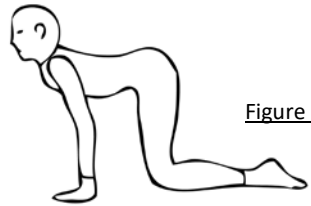
3. Ankle / Body stretch breathing

- Starting position: Mountain posture, palms resting on the thighs, eyes looking straight (Figure 3a).
- While breathing in, raise the straight arms to the vertical, come up on your toes and stretch the body (Figure 3b).
- While breathing out, return the heels to the floor and the hands to the thighs.
- **Do this five times** slowly, continuously and synchronously with the breathing rhythm.
- Return to the starting position, let the arms hang loosely by the sides of the body and be aware of the changes of the breathing and the sensations in the feet, legs, arms and shoulders.



4. Tiger breathing

- Starting posture: Japanese sitting (sit on your heels). Lean forward and place the hands flat on the floor in line with the shoulders, fingers pointing forward. Hands, knees and heels should be about shoulder width apart. The arms and thighs are perpendicular to the floor, the back is straight. (Figure 4a)
- While exhaling arch the spine upwards and bend the head downwards bringing the chin towards the chest, look towards your navel – Cat posture (Figure 4b).
- Inhaling raise the head and look at the ceiling, thus curving the neck downwards.



- Continue the movement by curving the spine vertebra by vertebra downward, thus making it concave – Cow posture ([Figure 4b](#)).
- Exhaling, starting at the lower back, vertebra by vertebra curve the spine upwards, finally bend the neck, suck the stomach in and look to your navel. Do not drop the head immediately when starting to exhale.
- Do not bend the arms or move the thighs forwards and backwards. Do not exert much effort – it is primarily a relaxation exercise.
- This is one round of Tiger breathing. **Do 10 rounds.**

5. Unsupported bridge

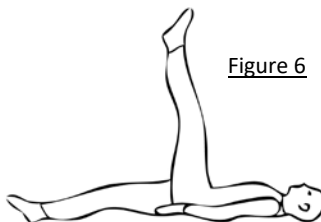
- Starting position: Lie on your back, feet parallel and hip wide apart close to the buttocks on the floor. Place the straight arms, palms down, close to the body on the floor or bring the straight arms, palms up, behind the head on the floor.
- While inhaling raise the buttocks 10-20 cm above the ground ([Figure 5](#)).
- Shoulders and feet are pressing firmly against the ground.
- While exhaling return the buttocks to the floor (**do 5 times**).



[Figure 5](#)

6. Straight leg raise breathing

- Starting position: Lie on your back, legs straight, feet and knees together, arms by the side of the body, palms down.
- While inhaling raise the straight left leg slowly as high as comfortable (if possible to the vertical).



[Figure 6](#)

The right leg stays in contact with the floor (Figure 6).

- While exhaling return the leg slowly to the floor.
- Repeat with the right leg. This is one round. **Do 3-5 rounds** slowly and continually according to your breathing rhythm.
- If your back is healthy and after having trained it with the above exercise for some time you can now try to lift both legs simultaneously to the vertical (**3 times**).
- Rest in one of the relaxation postures while lying on the back and be aware of the changes of the breathing and the sensations in abdomen and lower back.

7. Nose to the knee - Pavana Muktasana

- Starting position: Lie down on your back, legs straight, feet and knees together, arms by the side of the body, palms down.

- **Variation (I):**

Bend the right knee, place the left hand on the knee and the right one on top of the left, and pull the knee towards the chest. Keep the straight left leg on the floor. Breathe in.



Figure 7a

- While exhaling lift the head off the floor and try to bring the nose to the right knee (Figure 7a). While inhaling return back and head to the floor (**do 3 times**).
- Return the right leg to the floor and do the exercise with bent left knee (right hand on the left knee and left hand on top of the right).

- Bend both knees, grasp the knees with both arms and pull the knees close to the chest. Exhaling lift the head and try to bring the nose between the knees (Figure 7b). Inhaling return back and head to the floor (**do 3 times**).



Figure 7b

8. Diagonal arm and leg lifting

- Starting position: Lie on your front, legs straight, feet, and knees together, straight arms in front of the head on the floor, forehead on the floor.
- While inhaling raise the straight right arm and left leg off the floor (not too high), forehead may be raised or kept on the floor (Figure 8).
- While exhaling return arm and leg to the floor.
- During the next inhalation raise the left arm and right leg etc. Do this 5 times with each arm-leg combination.
- Rest in one of the relaxation postures while lying on the front and be aware of the changes of the breathing and the sensations in the lower back.



Figure 8

9. Spinal twist - lying on the back

- Starting position: Lie on your back with the legs together and arms spread 90° sideways at shoulders level. Hands resting on the floor and palms should be facing towards the ceiling. Fold legs at the knees and place the feet on the floor close to the buttocks and inhale.
- While exhaling lower the knees to the right towards the floor as far as comfortable and simultaneously turn the head to the left, looking to your left hand (Figure 9). It is not important that the knees touch the floor, but it is important, that both hands and both shoulders and at least one foot stay in contact with the floor all the time.
- Then, while inhaling, raise the knees up to the vertical and bring the head to the centre.



Figure 9

- While exhaling lower both the knees to the left towards the floor and turn the head to the right, looking to your right hand.
- While inhaling, bring the knees and the head back to centre (to the starting position).
- This is one round. **Perform 10 times.**