

Yoga for Strong Legs

This workshop is to acquaint you with the Yoga poses that can help to strengthen the lower body. You will benefit by strengthening the legs, stabilizing the hip, knee and ankle joints, stretching legs actively and passively and helping you to spot and correct muscular imbalances. Remember this is only one component to an overall exercise program to help to improve or maintain your wellness.

Let's take a look at some of the poses we will do today ...

Straight leg posture: Mountain Pose

Knee flexion with hip flexion or extension: Child's Pose and Bridge Pose

Knee bent, weight bearing: Warrior I and Warrior II

Hip Rotation and flexion: Supine spine twist

Dorsi Flexion (decrease of angle from between foot and leg): Chair pose

The sheets provided give a description of the poses that we will discuss in the lecture today. You can work up to holding these postures for 1 to 2 minutes, but I recommend you start out slow, say 10-20 seconds.

As with any exercise program make sure you warm up for 5-10 minutes before beginning the following exercises. Then when completed perform some stretches to cool down.

Have fun!

Namaste,
Lisa Brunson

Mountain Pose - Neutral (ground)

- Use this pose when you need to take a break and/or calm the mind and get back to being centered and focused.

How to get into Mountain

- Stand with feet hip width apart
- Starting from the ground firmly place each foot on the ground, (finding those four places on each foot (or three) to evenly place your weight) lifting the knee caps so that the thighs (quads) then become engaged, slightly tucking the tail bone, bringing belly button to spine, working ribs to hips, shoulders down and away, arms at your sides, palms facing out.
- Ears over shoulders, shoulders over ribs, ribs over hips, hips over knees, knees over ankles.

Closing your eyes and breathing east to west, take a moment to calm your mind.

Modifications & Props

Seated Mountain: Sit in the middle or on the front edge of the chair with feet hip width apart and knees aligned over ankles and both pointed forward. Sit tall as if an imaginary string is attached to the top of your head and pulling it toward the sky.

Warrior I - pose of strength and determination!

- Gently stretches back and hip flexors and lats
- Strengthens thighs and glutes

How to get into Warrior I

- From Mountain stepping back the left leg so that right leg is in front, bringing right knee to a lunge position (about 90 degrees) very important to stack knee over ankle! left leg is straight and left heel is pivoted in toward the body so that the heel is the greatest distance from our bodies (if there is discomfort in joint, keep a small bend in the back knee)
- Allowing the torso to face forward, working chest and belly button toward the front knee keeping back heel on the ground.
- Arms come up, then working shoulder blades down and back, fingers are “active”, reaching. Keep abdominals strong.
- Keep front knee working toward middle or second toe. Keeping shoulders and hips stacked. Don't forget to switch sides!
- Always remember to breath!

Modifications & Props

Use a folding chair (no arms). Use the same standing alignment but straddling the chair allowing the chair to support you. Or using the same standing alignment in the standing pose and allowing the front hand to support you on the back of the chair. Always remember to do both sides and BREATHE!

Warrior II - increases stamina

- Strengthens and stretches the quads and glutes and ankles
- Stretches the groins, chest and lungs, shoulders
- Increases stamina

How to get into Warrior II

- From Mountain stepping back the left leg so that right leg is in front, bringing right knee to a lunge position (about 90 degrees) very important to stack knee over ankle! left leg is straight and left heel is pivoted in toward the body so that the heel is the greatest distance from our bodies (if there is discomfort in joint, keep a small bend in the back knee)
- Arms come out to shoulder height (parallel with floor) “active” fingertips. Reaching from your heart center thru each hand. Looking out over front fingers.
- Navel points toward the side.
- Keep front knee working toward middle or second toe. Keeping shoulders and hips stacked. Don’t forget to switch sides!
- Always remember to breath!

Modifications & Props

Use a folding chair (no arms). Use the same standing alignment but straddling the chair allowing the chair to support you. Or using the same standing alignment in the standing pose and allowing the front hand to support you on the back of the chair. Always remember to do both sides and BREATHE!

Chair Pose

- Strengthens quads and glutes, back shoulders, feet and ankles

How to get into Chair

- From Mountain bend at knees and move the hips back like sitting in a chair, moving weight into heels.
- Lift chest and chin and gaze straight ahead.
- Keep knees behind toes

- Always remember to breath!

Modifications & Props

For additional support, hands may hold side of chair while body is hovering or hands may rest on the back of a chair for support.

Tree Pose – balance challenge pose

- Strengthens thighs, calves, ankles, and spine
- Stretches the groins and inner thighs, chest and shoulders
- Improves sense of balance

How to get into Tree Pose

- Stand in good “Mountain” posture. With your right foot, place toes on the ground and heel at ankle or foot at shin or even inner thigh. Find a place to focus and inhale the arms to mid-way over head or in prayer position at your chest.
- Keep your “core” strong and remain standing tall.
- Focus on your breath and clearing the mind. Hold this pose from 30 seconds to 1 minute. Remember to switch sides!

Modifications & Props

Use a chair and stand to the side and back using the back of the chair for support of one hand. Use a chair and face the seat portion, place the knee on the seat and raise one or both arms. Use a chair and stand to the side of the seat and place your knee on the seat while holding on to the back of the chair.

Child's Pose - a restful pose

- Gently stretches the hips, thighs, and ankles, back and shoulders
- Calms the mind and helps relieve stress and fatigue

How to get into Child's Pose:

- From all fours gently press hips back to heels, you may then spread the knees as wide as the mat (keep big toes touching) or keep knees just slightly apart.
- Bring belly onto thighs or between thighs and forehead resting on the floor. You may place a pillow or rolled up towel under hips for added support.
- There are a few arm positions (a) the arms in front of you (reaching long) with the palms toward the floor about shoulder width apart (b) bring the arms back alongside the thighs with the palms facing upwards or (c) if you have shoulder and/or neck issues can make fists with the hands, stack them and rest forehead there. The most important thing is to find that position which is most

comfortable for you. Remember you can rest here from 30 seconds to a couple of minutes!

Modification: With chair in front you can place forehead on chair and arms outstretched or place hands on side of chairs with arms fully extended (flat back) with head right between biceps. Use a wall to place hand on for support, doorway or any other stable object.

Bridge Pose

- Strengthens glutes, hamstrings, calves.
- Stretches abdominals and chest

How to get into Bridge Pose:

- Lie down on your back.
- Feet are flat on the floor, hip width apart, knees bent.
- Arms at sides, palms down, by hips, fingers reaching away.
- Inhale as you lift the hips toward the sky, pressing thru the heels, keeping feet and thighs parallel. BREATHE!

Seated one legged Balance

- Strengthens glutes, hamstrings, calves and core stabilizer

How to get into Seated one legged Balance:

- Begin in Seated Mountain
- Can use a block under feet for proper balance and posture.
- Lift one leg off the block or floor, straight out, really activating the quad muscle, and maintaining the proper Seated Mountain posture. Hold for 20-30 seconds. Switch legs.

Stretches while you are on the floor

Bent knee spinal twist (contraindicated for Osteoporosis)

Hamstring Stretch (can also be done seated)

Hip Abductors/Flexors (Pigeon or Figure 4) (can also be done seated)