



**Santhika  
Retreat  
Center**

## 7 Calming Yoga Poses for Autoimmune Disease

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An autoimmune disease is a pathological state arising from an abnormal immune response of the body to substances and tissues that are normally present in the body.

Normally, our immune system protects the body from disease and infection, but when you have an autoimmune disease, your immune system attacks healthy cells.

It is still unknown what causes autoimmune disease, although sometimes they can be passed down genetically, and women are more likely to be diagnosed with them. Other triggers of autoimmune disease are mental and physical stress. There are 80 known autoimmune diseases and some have similar symptoms, making diagnosis challenging and frustrating.

Just a few of the well-known autoimmune diseases include Lupus, Psoriasis, Multiple Sclerosis, and Rheumatoid Arthritis.

Autoimmune disease can be frustrating, uncomfortable, and even debilitating. However, natural remedies like yoga can be extremely beneficial for treating many of these diseases.

### 1. **Kapalabhati breath:**

Also known as “Skull Shining Breath,” this pranayama (breathing) technique is known for its ability to energize, clear the lungs and nasal passages, and clear the mind. For this technique, the emphasis is on a strong and forceful exhale with a passive, natural inhale.

Note: This breathing technique should not be performed by women who are pregnant.

Place a block on your mat and sit on the block with your legs in a cross-legged position. Place your left hand facing up on your left thigh and place your right palm on your belly.

Close your eyes and begin to inhale and exhale through your nose. When you are ready to begin, inhale through your nose, then take a sharp, forceful exhale through your nose while at the same time pulling your navel up and in towards your spine to contract your abs.

As you let the abs expand back out, take a natural inhale, then again take a sharp exhale. Continue in a rapid succession, with about one exhalation per second, for 20 breaths. After the last exhale, allow your breath to return back to normal.

Take a moment to notice how you feel, then slowly open your eyes and draw your awareness back to the room.





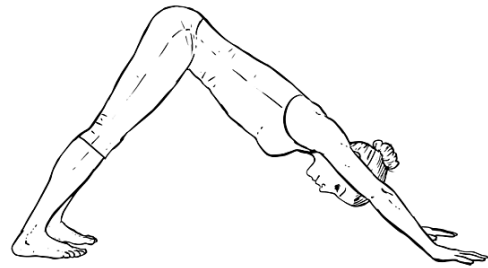
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### 2. Downward Facing Dog

This simple inversion is beneficial for relieving stress and anxiety, while also improving flexibility (6).

Begin on your hands and knees in a tabletop position. Walk your hands forward a few inches so that your wrists are in front of your shoulders.

Tuck your toes under and press into your palms as you begin to straighten your legs and lift your hips up towards the sky.



Lift up through your tailbone as you pull your navel in towards your spine and press your chest towards your thighs. Try and make your back straight. Gaze towards your belly and hold here for 8 slow breaths.

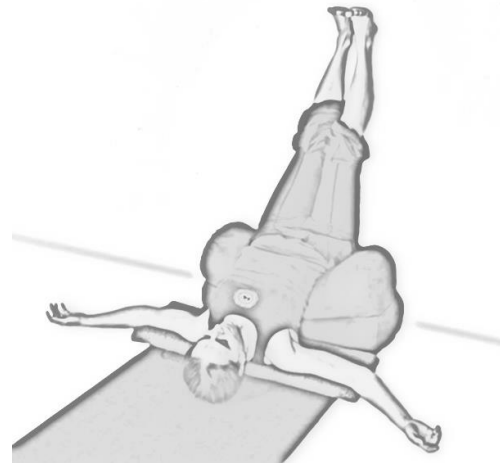
Tip: If your lower back is tight, keep a bend in your knees while holding this pose.

### 3. Supported Shoulder Stand

This pose compresses the thyroid and parathyroid glands to help with metabolism and immunity.

Begin lying down on your back with a block off to one side. Place your arms down alongside your body. Draw your chin down towards your chest to keep your neck long.

Bend your knees and place your feet on the mat, hip-width distance apart. Press into your feet to lift your hips up into a bridge pose. Slide the block, on the lowest or the medium height, beneath your hips and lower your sacrum down onto the block.

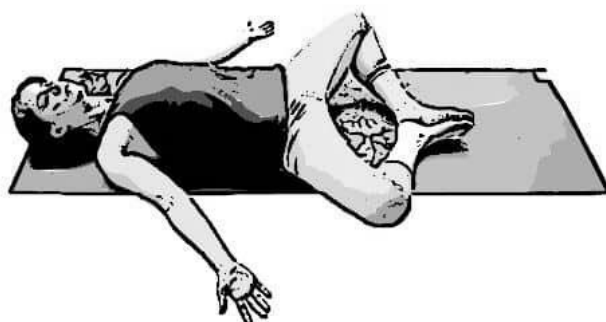


Pick your feet up off the mat and straighten your legs up to reach your feet towards the ceiling. Your lower back shoulders should feel supported by the block. Keep your palms face down. Close your eyes and hold for 8 slow ujjayi breaths.

### 4. Reclined Cobblers

This restorative pose opens up the chest and the hips. It helps balance the nervous system by bringing the body and mind into a relaxed, parasympathetic state.

Start by placing a bolster or long pillow vertically up and down your mat. Place a block off to either side of your mat.





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Sit in front of your bolster with your knees bent and your feet on the mat. Walk your feet all the way together, then let your knees fall out wide. Keep the soles of your feet touching. Grab your blocks and slide one block underneath each thigh for support.

Place your hands behind you and carefully lower your back onto the bolster. Your butt should stay on the ground. Take your arms out by your sides and turn your palms to face up. Close your eyes and hold for 3-5 minutes.

### 5. Supported Upright Angle

This pose helps to open up the hips and hamstrings. It also helps to release stress and achieve a sense of calm.

Begin seated on your mat with your bolster or long pillow in front of you. Separate your feet out wide, with your toes pointing up towards the sky. Slide one end of the bolster between your thighs.

Place a rolled up towel or blanket on the far end of the bolster and slowly lower your forehead down onto it.

Place your forearms on either side of the bolster and close your eyes. Allow yourself to completely relax and stay here for 3-5 minutes.



### 6. Viparita Karani with Baddha Konasana Legs

This relaxing pose helps direct energy upwards within the body, allowing your body to drop into a restful state.

Begin with a block off to one side and sit next to the wall with your legs parallel to the wall. Roll back and slide your legs up the wall.

Bend your knees and press your feet into the wall to lift your hips. Slide the block underneath your sacrum.

Extend your legs up the wall. Then bend your knees and bring the soles of your feet to touch, letting the knees fall out wide. Spread your arms out wide by your sides, with your palms facing up. Close your eyes and find a natural breath. Allow the muscle of your face to relax and hold for 5 minutes.





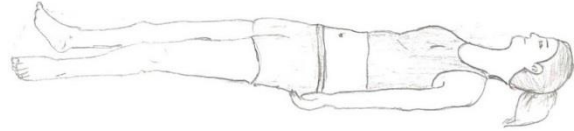
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### 7. Yoga Nidra (Savasana)

Yoga Nidra, also referred to as “Yogic Sleep,” is a meditation technique that allows for ultimate relaxation, bringing us into a state of deep relaxation and releasing stress and tension.



Begin by lying down on the floor in comfortable Savasana, corpse pose. Turn your palms to face up and take your feet out wide, letting your toes fall outward. Get comfortable and close your eyes. Take 3 deep breaths in through your nose and out through your mouth.

Gradually move your awareness throughout your entire body. Start at the tips of your toes, feeling each toe individually. Work your way up through your feet, through your ankles, up your shins and calves, through your knees and thighs, to your hips. Scan your belly and back all the way up to your shoulders, down your arms, to your hands, and all the way to your fingertips. Scan back up your arms and shoulders to your neck and throat, up the back of your head and through your ears, chin, lips, nose, and eyes, going all the way up to the crown of your head.

Then bring your awareness to your breath, noticing where your inhales fill up your body and the length of your breath. Without judgement, notice any other thoughts that come in and just watch them float back out. After a few minutes, when you are ready, draw your awareness back to your body, then to the room, slowly allowing yourself to come out of it. Blink your eyes open.

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