



Santhika
Retreat
Center

Yoga to Increase Flexibility and Strengthening the Knees

Yogi Bhajan

www.santhikaretreatcenter.com



Basic Spine Flex. Place the hands on the shins right above the ankles. Grasp the shins firmly and now inhale through the nose and lift the chest high and tilt the pelvis forward. Now exhale through the nose and gently tilt the pelvis the opposite way. Inhale up and exhale back. Continue. Remember to keep the chest high and keep the chin level to the ground in both positions (3 minutes).

Benefits: Stretches and strengthens the lower back. It changes brain wave patterns after three minutes to make you calm.



Front Stretch Left. Stretch your left leg out in front of you straight; right foot against the inner thigh of the left leg. With both hands, stretch forward and then down over the left leg. Hold on to your thigh, knee, shin, ankle or foot (whatever you can reach) with both hands. Keep the chin at a right angle to the chest. Stretch forward and then down, until you On inhalation, raise arms feel gently challenged by the stretch. No bouncing. Long, slow deep, breathing (2 minutes).

Benefits: Stretches the life nerve (sciatic nerve). Also good for the lower back, stretching the hamstrings and relaxing the quads.



Front Stretch Right. Stretch your right leg out in front of you straight, left foot against the inner thigh of the right leg. With both hands, stretch forward and then down over the left leg. Hold on to your thigh, knee, shin, ankle or foot (whatever you can reach) with both hands. Keep the chin at a right angle to the chest. Stretch forward and then down until you feel gently challenged by the stretch. Long, slow, deep breathing (2 minutes).



Butterfly. Bring the soles of the feet together with the heels close to the groin. Tilt the pelvis forward. Keep the chin at a right angle to the chest and using the muscles in your legs, press the knees toward your mat. Long, slow, deep breathing (2 minutes). Benefits: Opens up the hips. Stretches the inner thigh and life nerve.



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Standing Knees/Toe Raises. Slowly come standing up. Have the feet shoulder width apart with the feet at a right angle to the body. Bring the arms up parallel to the ground with the palms flat and shoulder width apart. Rise up on the tiptoes. This is the inhale position. Exhale and staying on the toes and keeping the chest lifted, bend the knees until the thighs are at about parallel to the floor. Inhale up and exhale down, staying high on the toes as best you can (2 minutes).

Benefits: This is good for overall circulation. It strengthens the quads and is also good for strengthening weak knees. It energizes the sex nerve and life nerve.



Half-Spinal Twist Left. Come out of position, sit down and stretch your legs out in front of you straight. Bring the left knee up. Now cross the left foot over the right leg placing the foot flat on the floor. Now take the left hand and bring it all the way back down and behind you on the left side. Take the right arm and wrap it around the left leg. Straighten up. Keeping the chin level to the ground, turn the chin all the way left. Chest up high, left shoulder and chin all the way left. Hold the position. Long, slow, deep breathing (1 minute).

Benefits: Opens up the hips and energizes the spine.



Half Spinal Twist Right. Stretch your legs out in front of you straight again. Bring the right knee up. Now cross the right foot over the left leg placing the foot flat on the floor. Take the right hand and bring it all the way back down and behind you on the right side. Take the left arm and wrap it around the right leg. Straighten up. Keeping the chin level to the ground, turn the chin all the way right. Chest up high, right shoulder and chin all the way right. Hold the position. Long, slow, deep breathing (1 minute).



P-Stretch Left. Come up on the knees and bring the right knee up, placing the left foot on the ground. Leave the left knee on the ground, extending the left leg behind you. Scoot the right toes forward so you create as much angle as possible with the back (left) leg. Make sure the right shin is at a 90-degree angle to the ground and you are keeping the plane of the hips at a 90-degree angle to the left leg. Keep the torso upright. Have the hands in Venus Lock, invert the grip and bring the arms up overhead, straightening the elbows. If you feel unstable, have both hands on the right knee to support your upright position. Long, slow, deep breathing (1 minute).



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Benefits: Stretches the psoas, strengthens the thighs and opens up the chest and shoulders.

P-Stretch Right. Remain on the knees and bring the left knee up, placing the left foot on the ground. Leave the right knee on the ground, extending the right leg behind you. Scoot the left toes forward so you create as much angle as possible with the back (right) leg. Make sure the left shin is at a 90-degree angle to the ground and you keeping the plane of the hips at a 90-degree angle to the right leg. Keep the torso upright. Have the hands in Venus Lock, invert the grip and bring the arms up overhead, straightening the elbows. If you feel unstable, have both hands on the left knee to support your upright position. Long, slow, deep breathing (1 minute).



Standing Forward and Backward Bends. Slowly come standing up. Place feet about shoulder width apart with the feet at a right angle to the front plane of the body. Bring the arms up overhead with the palms facing the ceiling and the elbows straight. Inhale and stretch up and back and then exhale as you reach forward and then down. Keep the upper arms hugging the ears so that you move as a unit from the upper body. Inhale up; exhale back (2 minutes).

Benefits: This is a total spine exercise that also stretches the hamstrings and opens the chest, diaphragm and lungs.



Arm Chops. Come sitting comfortably cross-legged. Make the hands into a basket and keeping the elbows straight, inhale and raise the arms up, exhale and lower the arms down in a wood-chopping motion. Powerful deep breathing (1 minute).

Benefits: Loosens and strengthens the shoulders and opens the lungs.



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Head Turns. Remain sitting cross-legged, have the hands folded in the lap. Keeping the chin level to the ground, inhale and slowly turn the head to the left and exhale and slowly turn to the right. Long, slow, deep breathing (2 minutes).

Benefits: Relaxes the neck and shoulders and back of the head. Also opens up the higher glands (thyroid, pituitary and pineal).



Spine Flex with Breath Held In. Place the tongue on the inner gum line above the two front teeth and keep a slight pressure with your tongue throughout the exercise. Place the hands on the shins right above the ankles. This is a spine flex with the breath held in while you flex. Grasp the shins firmly and inhale through the nose and lift the chest up high, tilting the pelvis forward. Hold the breath as long as you comfortably can as you are flexing the spine. When you need to, come upright, exhale through the nose, then inhale, hold the breath and continue flexing (3 minutes).

Benefits: This is a rejuvenating exercise, brings a lot of extra oxygen into the blood. Yogis say that doing this regularly can reverse the aging process. This will make you young and juicy again!



Deep Relaxation. Come out of position and rest on your back. Lie down flat, have the arms by the sides, palms facing up, with the eyes gently closed and the breath soft and normal. Have the knees up slightly for comfort, if needed.

Benefits: Allows the body to be rebalanced and the mind to refresh itself. This is the position at the end of every series of exercises (or kriya).