

General Benefits, Cautions and Contraindications of Yoga © – Julie Lusk, M.Ed., E-RYT

Consult your health care provider for advice regarding your personal needs. List is not all-inclusive.

	General Benefits	General Cautions and Contraindications
Breathing (Pranayama) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dirgha (Complete breath) • Ujjayi (Ocean) • Nadi Shodhana (Alternate nostril) • Kapalabhati (Skull Shining) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oxygenates the blood. Cleans and nourishes all the cells, tissues and organs • Slows down the heartbeat (slow, deep breathing) • Calms down the nervous system (Dirgha, Ujjayi, Nadi Shodhana) • Increases energy (skull shining) • Aids digestion and elimination • Helps concentration and memory • Improves circulation and respiration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discontinue deep breathing if you become tired, lightheaded or irritated • If you feel irritated, make sure your abdomen is relaxed and not tense and that your breathing is even and smooth • Avoid rapid breathing if you have an abdominal aortic aneurysm, post-surgery or MI, carotid artery disease, shortness of breath, labile or uncontrolled hypertension, stable or unstable angina. Asthma.
Sitting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bound Angle • Staff • Head to knee • Posterior stretch • Seated spinal twist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides a powerful stretch to the entire back of body while aligning and strengthening • Increases spine and hip flexibility • Stretches muscles, ligaments and nerves in groin • Trims and strengthens hips, thighs and abdomen • Irrigates kidneys & adrenals • Massages, oxygenates and decongests abdominal organs • Improves digestion, assimilation and elimination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep knees below rim of pelvis. Aligns back and maintains natural spinal curves. Prevents rounding. • Weak or stiff back muscles: Sit on the front edge of a cushion to help with being aligned vertically • Stiffness in hips, sciatica or knee injury: Use cushions or towel under knees • Avoid constriction of the belly if pregnant • Avoid if you have had recent or chronic injury or inflammation of abdomen, knees or back
Kneeling <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child • Table • Pigeon • Downward dog 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthens arms and shoulders • Increases flexibility in the hips and legs • Massages, oxygenates and decongests abdominal organs • Tones and stimulates pancreas, liver, gall bladder, kidneys, spleen, intestines, and bladder • Stimulates digestion, assimilation and elimination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid if you have had recent or chronic injury or inflammation in knees. Use non-slip folded blanket under knees if they are sensitive • Pregnancy (after 3rd month); spread knees apart, use optional cushions under forehead and buttocks • Stiff or muscle-bound hips and legs: place one or more cushions between hips and heels (child) • Unmediated high blood pressure or excessive pressure in head or eyes: place a cushion under forehead or avoid • Downward Dog: Avoid if you have unmedicated high blood pressure, detached retina, weak eye capillaries, glaucoma, conjunctivitis or any infection of inflammation of the eyes or ears
Surya Namaskar (SunSalute)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer to benefits for asanas as appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow cautions for other asanas as appropriate •

<p>Standing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goddess • Mountain • Chair (standing squat) • Warrior asanas • Half moon • Lateral angle • Triangle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Builds strength and stability • Increases alignment and core awareness • Involves every muscle group - full range of movement • Strengthens muscles and nerves in the legs • Helps you feel centered and grounded • To be practiced at the beginning or end of session 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid stiffening arms and legs if you have high blood pressure, heart problems, or nervous disorders • These poses are strenuous, so approach with caution, especially if pregnant. • Always use core strength with proper foot, knee and hip, back, shoulder, and head alignment.
<p>Balancing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tree • Dancer • Eagle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops grace and poise • Strengthens major and micro-muscles in legs • Helps concentration and stamina 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid for 12-18 months after abdominal surgery • Avoid if pregnant • Be careful if you have weak knees • Be careful if you are prone to dizziness • Avoid if you have hip or knee arthritis or limitations
<p>Belly Down</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boat • Sphinx • Cobra • Locust • Frog 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revitalizes, stretches and strengthens entire abdominal, endocrine and reproductive systems • Irrigates kidneys with fresh blood supply to help eliminate toxins • Aligns the spinal column; Expands chest, strengthens lungs and facilitates deeper breathing • Tones and strengthens buttocks, thighs, and legs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weak back muscles– Use core lift and repetitions with minimal holding • Avoid if pregnant (after 3rd month) • Avoid if you’ve had recent abdominal surgery or abdominal inflammation • Be careful with recent or chronic back injury or inflammation
<p>Supine (on back)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supine child • Supine spinal rotation (knee down twist) • Bridge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tones, opens and strengthens shoulders, abdomen, back, buttocks, thighs and leg muscles • Aligns and increases circulation to the spine, discs and associated nerves • Decreases stiffness in neck, shoulders and spine and improves flexibility • Stimulates digestion, assimilation and elimination • Expands chest, strengthens lungs and facilitates deeper breathing (bridge) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid if you’ve had recent or chronic shoulder or back injury or inflammation • Pregnancy (last trimester), avoid if posture inhibits breathing or lightheadedness occurs • Weak back muscles – Use core lift and repetitions with minimal holding (bridge) • Knee problems: Keep knees aligned over ankles and hip width apart (bridge)
<p>Inverted</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Half Shoulderstand • Fish 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improves circulation to brain, sinuses, complexion, thyroid • Reverses the effects of gravity • Balances endocrine system (thyroid) • Helps concentration and balance • Improves respiration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid if you have glaucoma, sinus problems, heart problems, detached retina, or ear problems • Avoid if you have recent or chronic neck problems • Use a blanket under the shoulders to protect the neck in shoulder stand • Use fully supported shoulder stand with legs up against the wall or resting on a chair if you have a heart condition or are menstruating

