



# *Integral Yoga*

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## **BENEFITS OF HATHA YOGA POSTURES**

***BHUJANGASANA (COBRA):*** Promotes elasticity of the spine. Develops suppleness of the upper spine in particular. Uses deep and superficial muscles of the back, toning them and bringing blood to them. Pulls every vertebra and its attached ligaments backwards and gives them a copious supply of blood. Makes minor adjustments of the vertebrae. Releases nervous energy up and down the spinal column. Relieves back fatigue. Stretches abdominal muscles. Increases abdominal pressure, thereby toning the abdominal organs and relieving sluggishness of the bowels. Circulates blood to the pubic region, bringing blood to sexual and reproductive organs. Helps prevent disorders of the uterus, ovaries and testes. Expands the chest, improving the posture and stretching the lungs.

***NAUASANA (BOAT):*** Deeply contracts muscles of the back, strengthening them. Aids digestion. Relieves low back pain. Benefits especially the prostate gland and the bladder.

***SALABHASANA (LOCUST):*** Greatly strengthens muscles of the low back. Vertebrae of lumbo-sacral region get a rich supply of blood. Intraabdominal pressure is very high. Tones the viscera and relieves constipation. If practiced with retention of the breath, full pulmonic pressure forces open idle cells of the lungs. Promotes elasticity of the lungs.

***DHANURASANA (BOW):*** Benefits of the Locust and the Cobra can be derived to a greater degree. Thoroughly flexes the spine backwards. All the vertebrae benefit. Weight on abdominal aorta sends a flush of blood to the abdominal organs. Relieves congestion of blood in the viscera, energizes digestion, and relieves gastro-intestinal disorders such as constipation and gas. Excellent for health of the ovaries and adrenals. Stretches pectoral muscles of the chest. Removes stiffness of the shoulder joints. Gives great stretch to the hip flexors and the large muscles of the abdomen (recti). Contracts and strengthens the muscles of the thigh.

***JANUSIRSHASANA (HEAD-TO-KNEE):*** Same benefits as in Full Forward Bend. Thoracic spine and intercostal muscles of the ribs are especially stretched. If the folded foot is brought up on the thigh, the heels exert a strong pressure on the lower intestines, stimulating peristaltic activity.

***PASCHIMOTTANASANA (FULL FORWARD BEND):*** Stretches the lumbo-sacral region of the spine greatly and stretches the hamstrings. Collected sediments in the intestines can be squeezed out. The sympathetic nervous system, epigastric nerves and lumbar nerves are toned. Stimulates the kidneys, liver, spleen, and pancreas. Oxygenated blood is brought to the sexual organs.

**SARVANGASANA (SHOULDER STAND):** Keeps the spine elastic especially the cervical spine, thereby preventing early hardening of the spine (a bent spine destroys health). Pressure on the thyroid releases thyroxin into the blood stream. This hormone maintains the healthy functioning of the sexual and reproductive systems, the circulation, digestion and respiration. Rests the legs and the veins, drains toxic blood from the digestive organs and rests the heart. Maintains good placement of the abdominal organs and aids the peristaltic action of the bowels. Generally good for the circulation, the pose centralizes the blood in the spinal column and in the nerves rooted in the spine nourishing them beneficially with a lot of blood. Coming into the posture strengthens the abdominal muscles (weak abdominals lead to poor digestion, poor posture and displacement of the vital organs). Holding the pose massages shoulder muscles where tension is often felt and strengthens muscles of the low back.

**HALASANA (PLOUGH):** Stretches the spine fully, especially the cervical spine and keeps it supple. Every vertebra and attached ligament gets a copious supply of blood. Fresh blood goes also to the 31 pairs of spinal nerves. The sympathetic nervous system is also well nourished. Deep and superficial muscles of the back are stretched and toned, aiding erect posture. Contracts and massages liver and spleen and other abdominal organs, rejuvenating them with a flush of blood. Relieves strain and tension in the neck. Coming into the pose contracts abdominal muscles vigorously and helps take extra fat off these muscles.

**MATSYASANA (FISH):** Endocrine glands above the heart (pineal and pituitary) are toned by the inversion of the upper body. The thyroid and parathyroid in the throat area are massaged and toned. Thyroxin released during the shoulder stand as the throat is compressed is carried off by the blood as the throat is stretched. The chest is greatly expanded aiding correct posture. Naturally massages congested parts of the neck and shoulders. The larynx and trachea are nourished. Coming into and out of the poses greatly strengthens the muscles of the neck. Stretches the intercostal muscles of the ribs and builds the strength and elasticity of the lungs.

**ARDHA-MATSYENDRASANA (HALF SPINAL TWIST):** Gives a vigorous twist to the spinal column. Excellent tonic for the sympathetic nervous system and the nerves rooted in the spine. Every vertebra and its attached ligament get a fresh supply of blood. Contracts the vital organs and tones them. Squeezes toxins from the intestines. Prevents calcium deposits in the shoulder joints and keeps their proper ease and placement. Gives the neck tendons a good twist. Relieves pain or stiffness in the hip joints and stretches the muscles of the buttocks.

**SIRSHASANA (HEADSTAND):** Strengthens the extensor muscles of the back and the neck muscles. Rests the heart and the legs. Valves of the veins are rested. Purifies the blood by speeding venous blood to the heart. Pure arterial blood flows freely to the brain cells. Since the brain is the center of all nerves, the whole nervous system is nourished and toned. The nerve centers that effect the sense organs get an increase of arterial blood, thereby alleviating disorders of the eyes, nose, throat and ears. The cervical and thoracic portion of the vertebrae get immense pressure, and the connecting ligaments get a supply of fresh blood. The pituitary and pineal glands, glands of the growth in the head, are also flushed with pure blood. Vital organs are kept in good placement and digestive organs are drained of accumulated toxins and venous blood. Regular practice can raise the hemoglobin content of the blood, helps insomnia, poor memory and low vitality. Generally good for circulation and, therefore, for cell nourishment.

**MAYURASANA (PEACOCK):** Strengthens back, wrists, arms, elbows and abdominal muscles. Abdominal aorta is partially compressed, and the checked blood is directed to digestive organs. This pose is a powerful tonic, checking sluggishness and torpor. It greatly improves digestion aiding the proper absorption of proteins, fats, sugars and salts.