

Chair Yoga Exercises

Chair Yoga is an option for anyone seeking a gentle, low impact yoga experience. People of all ages, levels, and physical conditions can benefit from chair yoga. It is taught by adapting poses, breathing techniques, meditation, and relaxation, with the aid of a chair. Most often the adaptations are from Hatha Yoga, but most any type of yoga (standing and prone) can be adapted to the chair as well. Chair yoga can cover standing, seated, and prone postures for those who have great difficulty getting up from the floor.

Many office staff are learning to embrace chair yoga and its benefits. It is common for an office worker to spend hours at his or her desk without taking a break. Before realizing it, their body has become tight and inflexible. They may feel neck and shoulder pain, lethargy and mid-afternoon sleepiness. Taking a chair yoga break every few hours could help a worker remain alert and flexible with more energy to complete the day. They may even have enough energy to go to a regular Yoga class after work. There are many DVDs out on chair yoga for the office as well as YouTube videos.

Here are instructions for some gentle Chair Yoga poses you can practice on your own:

Breathing:

Here we are going to do a few cycles of abdominal breathing. Sit back in the chair with your feet flat on the floor. Place hands on your thigh, with palms facing upward and roll shoulders softly up and down to release tension. If you would like, close your eyes. Start by just being aware of your breath. Feel your abdomen expand on the inhale as it pushes your hand out. Feel it go back down on the exhale. Think of how a baby breathes. Slow and relaxed. Next inhale deeply through your nose to the count of 3-4, allowing your abdomen to expand bringing oxygen into the base of the lungs. Exhale through your nose to the count of 3-4 as your abdomen contracts pushing air out of your lungs. Do this for 6-8 breaths

If at any time you feel dizzy or light headed, stop, breathe normally and join back in when you are able. Go back to normal breathing keeping your awareness on the breath.

Cat/Cow Pose:

Move toward the front of the chair and sit tall, lengthening the spine-with your chest out and your abs in. Place your hands on your knees with both palms facing in towards each other. Exhale while slowly rounding your back, lowering your chin and straightening your arms into cat pose. Look between the legs and feel the stretch in your spine as you hold the pose. Now inhale, lengthen the spine, look up as you raise your chest up, bend elbows arms back slightly back into cow pose. Be careful not to overextend. Hold the pose and enjoy the stretch. Do this slowly 4-6 more times and follow the rhythm of the breath.

Turn this into a flow keeping the hips and shoulders loose and fluid.

Side Bends with block:

Sitting tall at the front edge of the chair, place block to the right side of chair with fingertips to touch and lengthen the spine upward. Inhale and reach the left arm up with palms facing upward. Move your arms up and overhead tracing a rainbow. Exhale, lean the body to the right. Inhale, root left sitting bone or hip down to reach left arm and lengthen left side body. Exhale and soften body. Repeat sequence for 3 breaths.

Repeat on the second side

Sun Salutations:

Sitting at the front of the chair, take your knees slightly wider than hip-distance apart. Start with sweeping your arms out to your sides and eventually bringing palms together overhead or arms straight up. Exhale placing your hands on your thighs as you lean forward flattening your back. Inhale and then exhale you fold over, letting your hands rest on your shins or the floor. Inhale and come back up with a flat backbreaking, bringing your arms back to your thighs. Three more times with same breath and movement pattern. Sit up slowly to an upright position. Inhale, sweep arms overhead and exhale to lower hands to heart center.

Chair Pose:

Sit toward the front of the chair. Place block between thighs and squeeze block. Inhale, place hands on hips and sit upright with shoulder blades on back. Exhale, place your hands to prayer position and lift toes while continuing to squeeze the block. Inhale and reach arms overhead and continue to squeeze into the block while rooting hips down and reaching upward. Inhale and exhale for 3 breaths. Repeat pose 1-2 more times.

Cobra Pose:

Sit upright at front of chair with knees at hip width. Place your hands behind you and grasp the chair back or sides of the chair. Hold and Inhale and bring your chest forward, chin up. Feel the deep stretch in your chest and shoulders. Exhale, relax. Do a few more times.

Meditation:

Sit at the back of the chair in a way that will be comfortable for you for the next 3-10 minutes. Lean back in your chair and make sure your head and neck are aligned with your spine- keeping your shoulders running down and dropping your chin slightly. Use pillows and blankets if they will help make you more comfortable. Place your hands on your thighs with your palms up. Close your eyes. Lift your toes slightly, inhale and squeeze your toes together. Exhale and spread them apart. Lower your toes to the ground with the sensation of lightness, like the feet are floating on a cloud. Inhale and bring your attention to your calves and back of the knees. Exhale and relax the tension in your legs and settle there-like they are as light as a cloud. Take a moment to experience the feeling of relaxation in the feet and legs. Enjoy for a few breaths. Inhale through the front belly. Exhale out the back body and relax. Continue this series up from the belly button, lower back, chest and shoulders. Soften body with each breath.

Start deepening your breath and open your eyes. Wiggle your fingers and toes and move your shoulders softly, first one way, then the other. Sitting tall in your chair, take arms overhead as you inhale and bring hands down to chest at prayer as you exhale.

Namaste 🙏