

## Yoga For Back Pain

Are you balanced? It's a journey physically and emotionally. We live in this technological era, where almost everybody has a laptop, cell phone, or ipod. So, that means we spend a lot of time looking down at our electronic devices. This may encourage poor posture. Whenever I go to the local coffee shop, I see so many people crouching over their laptops. No wonder chronic back pain is so common, even among young people. How do we fix this? Many consider medical treatment, take pills, or just ignore it. Yet, if you become more aware of your posture by strengthening and stretching the necessary related muscles, you will probably feel a lot better in the long run.

Becoming aware of your posture helps you look and feel better. After you practice yoga for a while, you might have people tell you how good your posture looks. With better posture, you stand taller and look more confident. You will also reduce neck, shoulder, and lower back pain. Yoga involves lengthening, strengthening, and toning. In a yoga class, movements are always produced with balance in mind. For example, with every forward bend, there is a back bend that follows. Even if the back bend is small, it helps even out all the muscles that are working together. Poor posture results from doing common daily activities, such as typing on a computer, sitting at a desk at work, and slouching while sitting. So, even just doing some small bends to the side and back releases tension.

Yoga reduces chronic back pain by increasing blood flow and circulation to the targeted areas while helping to eliminate unnecessary toxins. When people crouch forward with bad posture, or overcompensate by leaning back, they put a tremendous amount of strain on joints and muscles. This may cause pinched nerves, muscle spasms, and overall aches and pains. So, back stretches will help. Sometime, your shoulders and neck tighten up too. An average head weighs 8 to 15 pounds. So if you tend to lean back or forward in your posture, your neck and shoulder muscles have to adjust by tightening up unevenly to support the weight of your head. Also, the back of your legs and thighs compensate too. You could have tight hamstrings or hips as you try to support your leaning upper body. Therefore, by stretching certain parts of your body, you are improving all these areas as they are all inter-connected!

Yoga also helps to strengthen and tone your body to improve your balance. For example, if you strengthen your stomach area, it relieves the burden your back muscles have to carry. Then, your torso is held up evenly with your stomach and back muscles, not just your back muscles. When you hold a pose in a yoga class, you have to engage your abdominals and learn how to balance your weight evenly. As you negotiate your balance, you are listening to the needs of your body. For example, in a yoga triangle pose, you are stretching one arm up as the other arm reaches to the floor. But, your core must be strong to keep you balanced. Also, in a yoga plank pose, your abdominals must engage to keep you in good form. In addition, holding up your whole body weight in a plank pose keeps your shoulders and chest strong, lessening the burden your back holds. Instead of your back holding up your torso weight, now your abdominals, chest, and shoulders assist too. These yoga poses result in less pressure and strain on your back.

Overall, don't ever dismiss any symptoms of discomfort. When you release physical pain, emotional pain may lessen. For instance, I'm usually feeling discouraged and less enthusiastic about my day when I am distracted by a headache or a backache. With physical pain, little things bother us more than usual. Some things in life we cannot control, and some things we can. If you can take yoga classes to ease your back pain, why not? When you have the time, give yourself the gift of wellness, and take a yoga class.