

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.

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	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
Standing <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.
Balancing <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
Belly Down <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
Supine (on back) <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)
Inverted <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