



Yoga is for Everyone Newsletter

December 2022 Newsletter



Happy Christmas Yogis!

A great Christmas Present suggestion for your loved ones - Yoga Class Vouchers!!!
Various prices to suit you! Please see the website or email for details.

Classes over the Festive Period

December - 6th / 13th / 20th – normal Tuesday Night Yoga (both Live and Online)

NO Classes on December 27th or January 3rd

Back to our normal schedule on 10th January
Please check the website.

My Christmas Present to You - Meditation 🎁

A Christmas treat - settle into a comfortable position then press the Speaker Play button. Relax and enjoy.



Asana of the Month Legs up the Wall (fabulous for time of the year) - Viparita Karani



Legs Up the Wall Pose or Viparita Karani is a restorative yoga posture that allows the mind and the body to relax, relieving stress and tension.

It is one of the most approachable yoga poses as it doesn't require much flexibility or strength. But even though it's a passive pose, its benefits are pretty amazing. Legs Up the Wall is also an excellent, calming pose for your morning or bedtime meditations.

1. Start by setting up a relaxing space around a wall
2. Next place your hips as close to the wall as possible.
3. Walk your feet up the wall until your body is in a somewhat L-shaped position.
4. Make any adjustments to facilitate a more relaxing space – maybe place a pillow under your head, or let your arms rest on your tummy or out to the sides.

5. Focus on your breath – try elongating your breath, taking a deep, slow inhale through your nose and a deep, slow exhale through your nose.

Try to stay in Legs Up The Wall pose for at least 10 – 15 minutes for optimal benefits.

Benefits

Legs Up the Wall pose might just be what we all need after an intense day of work – or at any time really when there's too much tension stored up in our body.

These are the main benefits of the Legs-Up-the-Wall pose:

1. Relaxes the mind and body – Legs Up the Wall is a great way to calm your nerves and make you feel better. You'll be able to relax deeply, release anxiety and tension, and get back into balance. It can bring the body back to its own innate capacity for rest, relaxation, and self-healing.
2. Increases circulation – This pose can help with swelling in the legs and feet, reversing gravity's effects on your lower body. It also facilitates venous drainage and improves lymphatic fluid movement for people who have low blood pressure or spend a lot of time standing up during their day. Elevating the legs promotes drainage from excess fluid build-up and assists circulation by facilitating the return of blood back to the heart.
3. Soothes muscle cramps – It's one of the best ways to help drain tension and soothe swollen or cramped legs and feet. This can be therapeutic after flying, physical activity, or from the detrimental effects of sitting/standing during the day. Moreover, Legs Up the Wall can even aid in pelvic floor relaxation and provide relief to menstrual cramps and its related issues like backaches, headache and abdominal pains. The pelvic muscles naturally release and relax in this position (more so with a cushion under the pelvis) resulting in a constructive exercise for a hypertonic (tense) pelvic floor.
4. Stretches hamstrings and glutes – Legs Up the Wall pose gently stretches your hamstrings, glutes, spine, and hips while taking pressure off of your lower back. Furthermore, the angle of the body in this posture reduces the curve of the lumbar spine, which will elongate and stretch the back muscles. The closer your hips are to the wall, the more stretch you'll create in your hamstrings. It provides a gentle boost while improving your flexibility.
5. Relieves lower back tension – Legs Up the Wall pose relieves pressure and tightness on the lumbar region, while also relaxing muscles in this area. Pressure is released from the spine in a supine position (especially on a bed or cushion), relieving the back from mild strain. It gently stretches the hamstrings and the back of the neck to ease back pain.
6. Eases headaches and migraines – As majority of headaches are usually tension-related, Legs Up the Wall pose helps to gently stretch and relax the muscles in your neck, shoulders, and back while improving circulation of blood flow to your head.
7. Improves digestion – When you combine a longer hold of Legs Up the Wall with slow, rhythmic breathing, you will be tapping into your "rest and digest" nervous response. In this state, your body will be actively digesting anything you have eaten, as well as working to heal and repair your body.
8. Improves sleep – Legs Up the Wall is a wonderfully relaxing pose. The semi-supine aspect of putting your legs up, combined with controlled breathing leads to a slowing down within your body. This exhibits itself in a lowered heart rate which elicits a relaxation

response and, in turn, helps lower anxiety, stress and insomnia. This pose is ideal as a preparation before bedtime if you struggle with your sleep.

9. Helps quiet the mind – By fully relaxing your body and by focusing on deep breathing in Legs Up the Wall pose, you will evoke a meditative state. As you breathe, surrender and let go, you'll find yourself slipping into peace and bliss.

10. Gives you all the benefits of inversion, without the effort– Just like yoga inversion, Legs Up the Wall pose can help to increase energy levels, reverse the effects of gravity on the whole system, help balance blood pressure, and soothe pain. Though this pose requires a lot less effort, you will still be getting many of the benefits of practicing an active inversion, while also fully resting and surrendering.

Cautions

When to avoid Legs Up The Wall pose;

- If you have concerns with stronger blood flow coming to your head.
- If you have medical conditions such as hernia, hypertension, or glaucoma.
- Some teachers suggest you do not do this pose during your heavy flow days during your menstrual cycle.

General Tips

- Try not to bring the body to a full 90 degree angle as this can impede circulation at the hips. Instead slide your hips a few inches from the wall and/or elevate your hips by placing a cushion under your sacrum.
- It's possible that you feel a tingling sensation in your legs or lower back when you do Legs Up The Wall pose. Your legs might also feel like they fell asleep. In this case, shake our your legs to stimulate circulation.

Mudras Part 1

The Basics of Mudras

Thumb – The fire (Agni)

Index finger – The air (Vayu)

Middle finger – The ether (Aakasha)

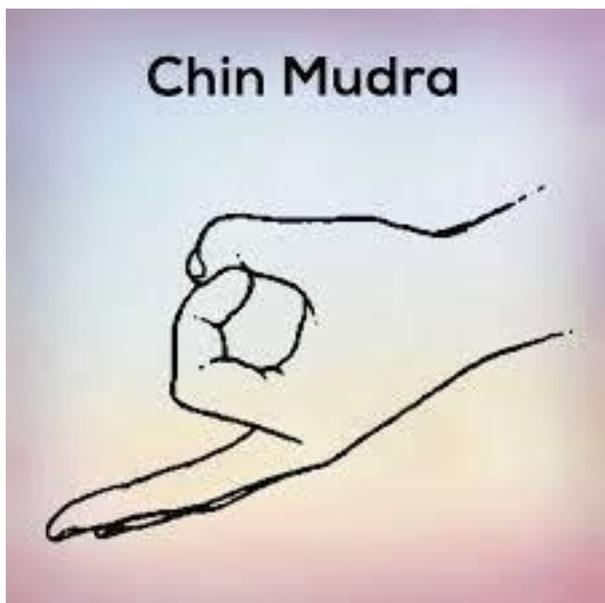
Ring finger – The earth (Prithvi)

Small finger – The water (Jala) So as to bring back the balance in the five elements, there are some specific methods of touching and aligning the fingers with each other.

These are referred to as 'Hast-Mudras' and this easy and doable therapy may be practiced anytime as an augmented relief from your malady as well as a handy tool for restoring your wellness

Chin Mudra

In Chin Mudra, or sometimes referred to as gesture of consciousness, the thumb and the index fingers touch at the tips while the other three fingers are extended. The hand rests on the knee with the palm facing down, in Chin Mudra the palms face down as part of pranayama, to encourage the feeling of being grounded if one's energy levels are high. This practice is also said to help strengthen the lower part of the body. The practice of Chin Mudra at a higher level talks about connecting the individual's consciousness to the universal consciousness. This means, trying to be aware of one's mind (individual consciousness) which is just an extension of the supreme consciousness or universal consciousness. To believe all are equal and come from the same source.



The Tradition of Advent

Advent is the period of four Sundays and weeks before Christmas (or sometimes from the 1st December to Christmas Day!). Advent means 'Coming' in Latin. This is the coming of Jesus into the world. Christians use the four Sundays and weeks of Advent to prepare and remember the real meaning of Christmas.

There are three meanings of 'coming' that Christians describe in Advent. The first, and most thought of, happened about 2000 years ago when Jesus came into the world as a baby to live as a man. The second can happen now as Jesus wants to come into our lives now. And the third will happen in the future when Jesus comes back to the world as King and Judge, not a baby.

Advent Sunday can be from the 27th November (which it was in 2016) to the 3rd December (which it was in 2017)! Advent only starts on the 1st December when Christmas Day is on a Wednesday (which happened in 2019)!

No one is really sure when Advent was first celebrated but it dates back to at least 567 when monks were ordered to fast during December leading up to Christmas.

Some people fast (don't eat anything) during advent to help them concentrate on preparing to celebrate Jesus's coming. In many Orthodox and Eastern Catholics Churches, Advent lasts for 40 days and starts on November 15th and is also called the Nativity Fast. (Advent also starts on November 15th in Celtic Christianity.)

In medieval and pre-medieval times, in parts of England, there was an early form of Nativity scenes called 'advent images' or a 'vessel cup'. They were a box, often with a glass lid that was covered with a white napkin, that contained two dolls representing Mary and the baby Jesus. The box was decorated with ribbons and flowers (and sometimes apples). They were carried around from door to door. It was thought to be very unlucky if you haven't seen a box before Christmas Eve! People paid the box carriers a halfpenny to see the box.

There are some Christmas Carols that are really Advent Carols! These include 'People Look East', 'Come, thou long expected Jesus', 'Lo! He comes, with clouds descending' and perhaps the most popular Advent song 'O Come, O Come Emmanuel!'.
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In ancient times the countdown to Christmas was by marking 24 chalk lines on a door and rubbing one off every day in December.

Paper calendars were first popular in Germany in the early 1900s, although people made their own ones from the 1850s. There's a debate about exactly where and when the first mass produced calendar was printed but it was in the first decade of the 1900s. The most famous and popular early maker of printed Advent calendars was a German printer called Gerhard Lang. His first calendars consisted of two sheets, a 'back' piece of card with the numbers 1 to 24 printed on it and a separate sheet of pictures which you could cut out and stick onto the numbers each day. The first calendars with 'doors' were made in Germany in the 1920s. During World War II, the production of Advent calendars stopped due to a shortage of cardboard.

When they were first made, scenes from the Christmas Story and other Christmas images were used, such as snowmen and robins, but now many calendars are made in the themes of toys, television programmes and sports clubs. The first record of an Advent calendar, in the UK, was in 1956.

The first calendar with chocolate in it was made in 1958; and in the UK Cadbury's made their first chocolate calendar in 1971. However, they didn't sell very many to start with. Chocolate calendars really only became popular in the 1980s.

Some European countries such as Germany use a wreath of fir with 24 bags or boxes hanging from it. In each box or bag there is a little present for each day.

There are also now all different types of Advent Calendars used to sell and promote different products including chocolate, perfumes, alcohol and beauty products. You can even get advent calendars for your pets with dog or cat treats in them! The world's largest advent calendar was made in 2007 at the St Pancras Train Station in London, England. It was 71m tall and 23m wide and celebrated the refurbishment of the station. The most expensive advent calendar ever was made in 2010 by a jewellers in Belgium. It was made of 24 glass tubes each containing some diamonds and silver! It was worth about £2.1 million.

There are two types of candle(s) that are used to count down to Christmas Day in Advent. The first looks like a normal candle, but has the days up to Christmas Day marked down the candle. On the first of December the candle is lit and burnt down to the first line on the candle. The same is done every day and then the rest of the candle is burnt on Christmas day.

Lutheran Churches in Scandinavia used 24 little candles to count down through December from the 1700s.

An Advent Crown is another form of candles that are used to count down Advent. These are often used in Churches rather than in people's homes. The crown is often made up of a wreath of greenery and has four candles round the outside and one in the middle or in a

separate place. Sometimes a more traditional candelabra is used to display the five candles.

Quotes of the Month

“To rise above the modifications of your mind, when you cease your mind, when you cease to be a part of your mind, that is yoga.”

Sadhgura.

“Let yourself be drawn by the stronger pull of that which you truly Love”

Rumi

Meditation for Christmas

Let go, let go, let go and breathe.

Feel the body drifting and melting.

Just be still, and steady.

Plant the seed of a affirmation into the mind, I am here in this moment, and at this moment this is all there is.

Now be aware of the in breath as it enters the body – be aware of the pause – and shadow the breath out of the body into the space around you.

On the next in breath, breathe the entire body, link into the vibration of the inhalation and the exhalation of the breath, creating a mantra.

Now release the clutter and all the busy-ness of the day.

Feel the mind emptying, reach out into space, elevate up into space and create some room to breathe mentally.

Now imagine white light travelling up the spine to the crown of the head, pause, now feel the light cascading down the front of the body like a crystal waterfall.

Imagine light at the tips of your toes.

Now take the attention to the right foot and take a thread of white light to your left shoulder.

Now take your attention to the left foot and take a thread of white light to your right shoulder.

Now take a thread of white light from the right hip to the left.

Now take a thread of white light from the left hip to the right.

Now hold the image of a bright star, as you start to pulsate with light.

Deepen the sensation with the affirmation I am a Star, I am a Star, I am a Star and believe that statement.

Now feel as though you are being guided into the dark blue velvet sky and against that background, how you shine, put some more energy into yourself until you feel yourself vibrating with light.

And look, you are not alone, because the sky is now filled with millions of stars, small and twinkling, large and solitary, groups and clusters, shooting stars, and you are being drawn into this light show.

Now start to direct your light towards planet earth in the knowledge that your light will breach the darkness, and help to heal and restore this troubled but fantastically beautiful planet.

Hold this visualisation a short while.

Now feel yourself drifting through the night sky, down towards your mat or chair, and feel lighter as if a weight has been shifted, your mind has cleared, your path is straight, and as you take a deep breath in, say to yourself all is well, and all, is well, at this moment.

Happy Christmas 🎄 Thank you for all your support.
See you on the Mat 2023

Namaste

Michele 🙏

