

Home Practice Sequence – Restorative for Menopause

Have the following props to use with this sequence:

- ☪ Several yoga blocks – 6" x 9" x 5"
- ☪ One or more folded blankets (or a fairly thick couch throw)
- ☪ One yoga strap – 6', 8' or 10' length (substitute a belt or necktie in place of a strap)
- ☪ One or two yoga bolsters (you can substitute firm king sized pillows)
- ☪ Two thick bath towels (or beach towels), each rolled tightly crosswise
- ☪ And, of course – Your Yoga Mat!

Begin by sitting (hips elevated on a folded blanket) in **Sukhasana (Easy Pose)**; bring awareness to the breath. Sit quietly, become centered and establish your intention for this practice.

With the hips remaining elevated on the blanket:

- ☪ Straighten and join the legs, bring the arms to your sides, palms to the floor to establish **Dandasana (Staff Pose)**. Stay for 20-30 seconds (5-6 full breaths).
- ☪ Take the legs wide apart into **Upavistha Konasana (Seated Wide Angle Pose)**, spine neutral. Bring straightened arms behind you for support, palms to the floor, tucking the finger tips under the outer, upper thighs. Breathe length into the spine; lift the torso up out of the pelvis; relax shoulders down and back. Keep toes and ball mounts of the feet broad; belly soft, tongue relaxed. Stay for 20-30 seconds (5-6 full breaths).
- ☪ **Baddha Konasana (Bound Ankle Pose)**: Gently bend the knees; bringing soles of the feet together; heels drawn as close to the perineum as possible. Allow the hips to open, knees lowering toward the floor. Place a block beneath each knee for support. Place straightened arms behind you, palms to floor, tucking fingers under outer, upper thighs. Breathe length into the spine; lift the torso up out of the pelvis; relax shoulders down and back. Stay for 20-30 seconds (5-6 full breaths). When ready to release the pose, support knees from beneath with the hands as you bring them together then straighten the legs into **Dandasana (Staff Pose)**. Stay for 20-30 seconds (5-6 full breaths).

Virasana (Heroes Pose): You will need the rolled towel and a block. Come to kneeling, with the rolled towel placed under the tops of the feet. Knees and upper legs should be joined. Separate the feet wide enough so that your hips will be able to rest between the feet. Bifurcate the calf muscles, moving the outer half toward the outside of the legs; lower the hips to rest between the feet, feet pointing back, tops of the feet on the rolled towel. If it is not comfortable to sit the buttocks on the floor between the feet, sit on a block. Breathe length into the spine; lift the torso up out of the pelvis; place folded hands in the lap. Stay for one minute (10-12 breaths); keep the belly soft to receive the breath; tongue relaxed, spine long and neutral. To release the pose - come toward hands and knees, remove the block and towel.

Supta Padangusthasana (Reclining Hand to Big Toe Pose): Place a block to the right side of the body about 30" away and in line with the right hip. Lie down in **Savasana (Corpse Pose)** with the soles of the feet against a wall. Have a strap close by. Bend the right leg; interlace the fingers to hug the knee toward the chest (taking care not to lift the head and neck from the floor). The left leg remains straight, neutral; sole of the foot firmly against the wall. Loop the strap around the arch of the right foot; hold one side of the strap in each hand. Slowly allow the right leg to straighten, keeping the strap taut. Extend and straighten the arms with both shoulders remaining on the mat. Flex the foot, spread the toes and ball mounts of the foot; reach the heel toward the ceiling. Keeping the belly soft, sustain this pose for 20-30 seconds (5-6 breaths). Transfer both sides of the strap to the right hand; place the left arm laterally beside you, palm facing up. Inhale and on the exhalation, allow the right leg to lower laterally toward the block you placed earlier. Keep the strap fairly taut; keep both shoulders on the mat. Let the foot come to rest on the block, allow the hamstrings to lengthen, the hip to relax open. Stay for 20-30 seconds (5-6 breaths), then slowly bring the leg back to center, using the strap to assist. Bend the knee and hug the knee to the chest, remove the strap. Straighten the right leg fully, allowing it to rest on the floor and parallel to the left leg (the body is now in Savasana). Re-center the body; take **Supta Padangusthasana** on the left side. NOTE: Additional blocks may be stacked for resting the foot of the lowered leg if the height of one block is not enough. From Savasana, roll onto the right side, use the arms to come up to sitting then come to standing.

Come to **Tadasana** (Mountain Pose) lengthwise on your mat; have several blocks stacked in front of the feet for **Prasarita Padottanasana (Intense Wide Leg Stretch)**. Step the feet widely apart, feet parallel with toes facing forward, hands on hips. Inhale and lengthen the spine, keep the sternum lifted. Exhale, fold forward from the hips, keeping the spine long and neutral. Place the hands – palms down, fingers spread – on the floor. Keep breathing

evenly, bend the elbows, and continue to lower the torso, neck and head toward the floor; place the crown of the head on one or more blocks or on the floor between the palms of the hands. Inhale; exhale and deepen the groins; move femurs to the back of the hip sockets, fully straighten the legs to lessen the pressure on the crown of the head. Allow the hamstrings to lengthen. Stay for not more than one minute (10-12 breaths). To release the asana, inhale, lift the head from the floor/blocks and straighten the arms. Exhale and rest in this halfway up pose to prevent lightheadedness. Inhale, continue lifting the head and torso smoothly together, placing the hands on the hips, come to standing; exhale. Inhale, bend the knees and step (or heel-toe) the feet together, then exhaling, come into **Tadasana** (Mountain Pose). Take several breaths for reflection and centering before moving to the next asana.

Adho Mukha Svanasana (Downward Facing Dog Pose) – have a rolled towel close by or practice close to a wall. Come to hands and knees – wrists directly below the shoulders, knees directly below the hips. Tuck the toes under; lift the knees about three inches from the mat. Begin to pull the pubic bone back between the legs, keeping the knees bent – the arms will straighten. Press down on the ball mounts of the index fingers and the pinkie fingers to take weight off the wrists. Keeping the spine long, arms straight, shoulders stable, begin to lift the sitting bones, allowing the legs to straighten and bringing the heels toward the floor. If the heels do not reach the floor when the legs are fully straightened, rest the heels on a tightly rolled thick towel or against a wall just above the level of the baseboard. Keep the belly soft, tongue and jaw relaxed. Stay for as long as you can maintain the asana with stability. With each inhalation, continue to lengthen the spine; maintain the length through each exhalation. To release the asana: exhale, bending and lowering the knees toward the floor, come to rest on hands and knees. NOTE: If the wrists are challenged, hands can be placed on a block with the wrists at the back edge of the block or on a wedge. The head may also rest on a block.

Adho Mukha Virasana (Downward Facing Hero Pose – supported) – have two bolsters and two rolled towels close by. From hands and knees, place one rolled towel on top of the backs of the ankles with the feet separated; sit back onto the towel. Place two stacked bolsters lengthwise between the knees and slide the bolsters as close to the groins and perineum as possible. Place the second rolled towel at the far end of the top bolster. Exhaling, fold forward and place the torso on the stacked bolsters, the forehead resting on the rolled towel. Extend the arms straight, palms down on the floor. Breathe evenly; stay in the asana for a minimum of 1 minute (10-12 breaths), longer if you can sustain the asana with ease and stability. To release the asana, slowly come up to kneeling, slide the bolsters and towel away from you, lean forward, remove the rolled towel from the ankles.

Supta Baddha Konasana (Reclined Bound Angle Pose) - Sit in front of a bolster placed lengthwise behind you. Loop a strap behind the back at the sacrum; bring it forward around the hips and over the shins while bringing the soles of the feet together with the knees bent. Secure the strap under the feet so it encircles the entire lower part of the body. Let the knees fall open and support them on blocks or firm pillows. Lie back with the spine centered on the bolster and arms out to the sides laterally, palms up. Stay for two to five minutes in the pose, breathing evenly, allowing the legs and hips to relax open, the chest to relax open. To come out of the pose, gently lift the knees back to center then roll gently to the right side off the bolsters, let the organs release toward the ground, and come up to sitting. Remove the strap.

Setu Bandha Sarvangasana (Supported Bridge Pose) - Place a bolster lengthwise on the lower portion of your mat. Lie back over the bolster so that it supports your back rib cage but allows your upper back and shoulders to reach toward the floor. Cross the shins and allow the legs to relax open. Let the arms rest overhead with the elbows bent, palms facing up. Stay for up to two to five minutes, breathing evenly. To release the pose, gently roll onto the right side (coming off the bolster) and rest long enough for the organs to release toward the ground. Use the hands to come up to sitting.

Viparita Karani (Supported Legs Up the Wall Pose) – You can use this pose as your Savasana; stay for at least five minutes while allowing the entire body to relax and refresh. Place the long side of a bolster about six inches away from the wall. Sit sideways on the bolster, with the side of your hip touching the wall. With the bolster supporting the buttocks, lower yourself back and swivel around so your torso is perpendicular to the wall and your legs are extended up it. Let the arms rest out to the sides, palms up. Stay for at least five minutes and gradually increase this time to a full ten minutes or longer. To release the pose, gently roll to the right side, bringing the legs down from the wall and bending them. Allow the organs of the visceral body to release then use the arms to come up to sitting. Take a moment to re-center and reflect on your practice.

Namaste