

## Yoga for a Healthy Immune System

This practice combines breathing and movement to build a deep connection with your body. It includes strengthening and relaxing poses to release tension and to calm ourselves. Yoga and mindfulness practices help us notice how our bodies react to stress. We can feel our face flushing, muscles tightening, heart rate increasing, and the trouble we have relaxing. All of this can take away the energy our immune system needs to fight illnesses. When we sense a threat, our bodies react to protect us. Yoga helps calm our nervous system and let our bodies know we are not in immediate danger. By getting rid of stress and tension, our immune system has more energy to do its job to protect us and help us stay healthy.



### 1) Pre- Centering Stretch

Begin by standing behind or next to your chair. Lift your arms to your side in a t-shape. Move your upper body side to side with arms outstretched reaching through your fingertips. Come back to center and let your hands fall to your sides.

### 2) Pre- Centering Stretch

Press your feet into the ground, moving them slightly until you find the spot where you feel strong and steady. Stand tall and feel your strength from the bottom of your feet all the way to the top of your head. From this steady standing pose, inhale as you raise arms above your head, then exhale as you slowly lower them to your side. Repeat this 5 times.

### 3) Centering

Sit in a comfortable position. Let your spine lengthen allowing the top of your head to reach toward the ceiling. Notice the feeling of your feet on the ground; the feeling of your legs, your arms, and your hands wherever they are resting. Feel the felt sense of your entire body where you are seated. Bring your awareness to feeling your body breathing and take 10 slow inhales and exhales.



### 4) Neck Stretch

Bring your right ear to your right shoulder. Take 5 easy breaths. Switch to the left side.

### 5) Shrug Shoulders

Shrug your shoulders up towards your ears 5 times. As you lift, inhale. As you release, exhale. After, it may feel good to make circles with your shoulders backward and forward.

### 6) Raise and Lower Arms

Slowly inhale raising your arms above your head, and as you exhale let them slowly return by your side. Imagine you are moving your arms through the water. Continue moving your arms with your breath 5 more times.

### 7) Arms to the Side

Then raise your arms out to the side at shoulder height and squeeze your shoulder blades together opening your chest. Do your best to relax while taking 5 full breaths.

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## 8) Extended Side Stretch

Reach your right arm up and over your head and move your upper body to the left. Take 5 breaths here. Switch sides. Return to center

## 9) Flow

Inhale and stretch your arms overhead. Exhale as you fold forward at your waist and hips, arms reaching out with a long neck and spine. Let your hands move down toward your feet. Relax your neck. Then inhale and slowly rise up. Repeat at least 5 times, until you begin to notice heat building in your body. Then pause, be still, and feel what you feel in your body. You may feel energy buzzing, you may feel that your breath has quickened. Whatever you feel, it is okay.



## 10) Standing Tree

Slowly stand and step behind your chair. Place your hands on the top of your chair. Press down into your left foot and place your right foot by your ankle or on your calf. Hold this pose for 5 breaths. For an extra challenge, bring one or both of your hands to your hips or raise them above your head. Repeat on the other side. Notice if one side felt different. Return to your seat in the chair.



## 11) Seated Eagle

Cross your right leg over the left above the knee. If this doesn't feel good, cross your right ankle over your left ankle. Sit tall. Bring your left arm over your right. Try to bring your hands together in some way. If this does not feel good, you can place your hands on your shoulders giving yourself a hug. Press your left foot firmly into the floor. Lean slightly forward. Take 5 breaths here. Repeat on the other side.

## 12) Repeat Flow Sequence (See #9)



## 13) Twist

Sit sideways with your right arm on the top of the back of the chair. As you exhale begin twisting your upper body to your right. You can place both hands on the top of the back of the chair to stabilize the twist. Take 5 breaths and release slowly out of the twist. Repeat on the other side. Return to center.

## 14) Closing/ Relaxation

Sit in a comfortable position. To help avoid falling asleep, move your feet forward instead of having them directly under your knees. You can also place something on your lap to rest your arms. Slowly move your awareness from your feet all the way up to the crown of your head. As you do this, see if you can release any tension you feel in your body. You might choose to stretch areas of your body as you go. As you relax, let your body breathe without trying to control your inhale and exhale. Take a few moments, 5 minutes if possible, to sit in stillness. You can close your eyes if that feels good, or leave them open softening your gaze. See if you can concentrate on feeling the movement in your body as you breathe. You may choose to feel your belly move, or feel your breath as it moves in-and-out of your nose. If thoughts arise, see if you can let them go and concentrate on the feeling of breathing.

*As you complete your practice, bring your hands together in front of your chest, bow your forehead toward your fingertips, and take a moment to acknowledge your own guiding light and your connection to others in your life.*