

62 MATSYASANA (FISH POSTURE)

How to enter:

- Lie on back, legs together
- Bring palms down, under thighs
- Flointing the feet
- **Inhale**, press fore arms in floor, bend elbows and lift the chest, drop head back and bring crown of head onto floor
- Engage the upper back muscles to lift the chest
- Keep on engaging the legs, draw mount of big toes away
- Focus on movement of thoracic spine

How to exit:

- **Exhale**, pressing into forearms, lead with chest, bring chin to chest, lower head and torso onto floor

Benefits:

- Stretches the chest, shoulders (pectorals)
- Stretches muscles around the heart
- Increases lung capacity
- Strengthens the quadriceps, upper back and neck
- Stimulates thyroid
- Releases tension and anxiety
- Balances all chakras
- Stimulates Prana and Vyana prana

Ways of Practice/ Variations:

- Place feet against wall to engage the legs
- Lay over a bolster
- Loop a strap at the mid thighs
- Raise extended legs in 45 °s angle

Adjustments:

- Verbally

Contra-indications and cautions:

- Neck, lower or upper back issues
- High or low blood pressure
- Migraine
- Glaucoma
- Insomnia
- Recent heart or breast surgery

63 SALAMBA SIRASANA (SUPPORTED HEAD STAND)

How to enter:

- Place a folded blanket or sticky mat on floor for head and elbows.
- Kneel on floor (Vajrasana)
- Distance your elbows by wrapping fingers around opposite elbows
- Interlace fingers, forearms on the floor, elbows shoulder-width, upper arms roll out
- Place the crown of head onto floor
- **Inhale**, start lifting knees of the floor and walk feet closer to elbows, heels lifted
- Lifting the kneecaps and upper thighs, forming an inverted "V"
- Ground fore-arms into floor, firm shoulder blades against the back towards tailbone, lifting away from collapsing in shoulders, head and neck.
- Core is engaged
- Walk your feet in until pelvis is in line with shoulders
- Raise one foot, coming in to tucked knee position
- Ground forearms in floor, keep engaging the core, keep on lengthening the tailbone towards heels, raise other foot, no jumping
- Start extending both legs to ceiling
- Balls of your feet reaching to ceiling
- Keeping core engaged, most weight is on forearms, only 10% weight is on the crown of the head
- Start with being in the pose for 5-10 breath. Building it up slowly until 3-5 minutes

How to exit:

- **Exhale**, with knees tucked in or straight legs, lowering the feet either one by one or at same time back on to floor

Benefits:

- Strengthens the arms, legs and spine
- Strengthens the lungs
- Stretches shoulders and neck, increases flexibility in the spine
- Reduces water retention in ankles, knees and whole legs
- Calms the nervous system, the mind, relieves stress
- Venous return is stimulated, blood circulation is stimulated
- Purifies the blood, brings fresh blood to the brain
- Improves concentration, deepens meditation
- Releases fatigue and insomnia
- Detoxifies and tones the abdominal organs
- Stimulates digestion
- Stimulates the immune system
- Improves function of all glands
- Helps relieve symptoms of menopause
- Therapeutic for asthma, sinusitis, infertility and insomnia
- Balances the Sahasrara chakra
- Stimulates all pranas

■ Ways of Practice/ Variations:

- Practice at the wall. Knuckles are against the wall
- Practice Dolphin posture and/or Crane posture

■ Adjustments:

- Check balance front and side: ankles, hips and shoulders are aligned

■ Contra-indications and cautions:

- Menstruation
- Pregnancy: if experienced, you can until late pregnancy, do not take up the practice after becoming pregnant
- Back or neck injuries
- Heart conditions
- High or low blood pressure
- Migraine