



Karuna Yoga Newsletter

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YOGA THERAPY UNLOCKING THE HIP FLEXORS

The hip flexors, also known as the psoas (pronounced so-az), is one of the longest muscles in the body and the only muscle that connects the upper body and lower body. This muscle controls our balance and our ability to sit, stand, twist, reach, bend, walk and step. The hips are possibly the most important region of the body.







The psoas muscle is located deep in the hip and it is responsible for stabilizing the spine and flexing the hip. It connects the legs to the spine, which means that what you do with your legs could possibly affect your spine. The psoas muscle can be found deep within the anterior hip joint and lower spine; it attaches to the side and toward the front of the 12th thoracic vertebrae and each of the lumbar vertebrae.

If the psoas muscle becomes shortened, the quadriceps muscles become overdeveloped which can cause knee and lower back pain. More and more people are sitting for long periods causing the psoas to shorten in length. It may be difficult to stand up all the way after these muscles are shortened. People with tight hip flexors may have hamstring strains and back pain, due to the excessive curve in the lower back.

It's better to have tight hip flexors than weak hip flexors as it's easier to correct the tightness problem. Loosening the constantly shortened hip flexors while strengthening the glutes will lead to reduced lower back pain and increased hip mobility.

The benefit of having a released psoas muscle is that you will feel more grounded and relaxed. Physically, you will be more flexible and have more mobility in every day movements feeling less stiff with less aches and pains. The dangers of having a tight psoas muscle can be obvious in back and hip pain and you may even have ankle and knee pain. Having a tight psoas muscle is also very fatiguing as the psoas directly connects to our diaphragm.

YOGA POSTURES TO UNLOCK THE HIP FLEXORS

<p>SUPTA PADANGUSTHASANA (reclining leg, foot and toe stretch) The stretch to the legs increases flexibility in the pelvic area. The stretch should not hurt. Feel the muscles stretching and breathe into the stretch. Take each leg out to the side moving with the breath as you feel the hip flexors unwinding.</p>	
<p>ANJANEYASANA (low lunge) Try this posture with both knees at a 90-degree angle. Gently move the hip forward of the back leg and contract the buttock muscle. Stretch up the arm on the same side as the back leg.</p>	
<p>BALASANA (child's posture) Move back into this posture but only go halfway for two long breaths. This is helping to stretch the hips. On the third breath move all the way back until you are sitting or almost sitting on your heels. This will now stretch the lower back.</p>	
<p>ADHO MUKHA SVANASANA (downward dog) A full body stretch that is creating movement in the hips. Take care not to lock your knees. Hold the mula bandha and pull the belly up and in to bring the pelvis into the correct position.</p>	
<p>NATARAJASANA (lord of the dance) Stand on your left foot and take your right foot behind as you hold the ankle. Keep your knees aligned as you move the right hip forward and lift the front of the body by pulling the belly up and in. You are gently stretching the hip flexor and the quadricep muscle. Stay upright for 3 breaths and then bend forward.</p>	
<p>VIRABHADRASANA I (warrior I) Move into this posture from a standing position at the back of your mat. This is a slight variation from the classic posture. Step your right foot forward with your knee bent, stay on the toes of your left foot and also bend the back knee as you take your arms overhead. Stay for 3 breaths and step the left foot forward. Step right foot back onto the toes into the same position and after 3 breaths step your left foot back.</p>	
<p>MALASANA (garland) Take your feet and knees wide and move into a deep squat. Bring your palms together and use your elbows to gently move your thighs out as you open the hips and unlock the hip flexors. You can do this posture sitting on a chair with your feet wide and bending forward to bring your palms together and using your elbows to open the hips.</p>	