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COVID 19

**RECOVERY**

A SUGGESTED YOGA PROGRAMME

*Compiled by Iyengar Yoga (UK) Therapy Committee*

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"Wherever space and  
stillness is created,  
prana flows."

B K S I Y E N G A R

Covid-19 is a highly infectious disease caused by the coronavirus. Most people infected will experience a mild to moderate respiratory illness, whilst others will show no symptoms at all. However for some the effects are severe and longer lasting.

Our aim in this yoga programme is to play some role in aiding the process of recovery. By only requiring the use of mostly basic props and furniture, we have tried to make the poses as accessible as possible for everyone.

By participating in this programme you agree do so at your own risk, are voluntarily participating in this activity, assume all risk of injury to yourself and agree to release and discharge the Therapy Committee from any or all claims or causes of action known or unknown arising out of this programme.

If in doubt please consult with your physician before starting this practice.



**Iyengar Yoga (UK) Therapy Committee** have given their time freely in the making of this publication and will continue to do so going forward. The designer Adrienne Bagnall also offered her time and expertise for free. If you wish to support the making of future ebooks then kindly feel free to support our work by making a donation to IY(UK).

Any money donated will be used to help pay the production costs in the making of other Yoga Therapy projects.

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# INTRODUCTION

Many people do not notice their breath until it is disturbed (by emotion, illness, fear, hard work etc), yet the breath is always there and changed by everything one does. Every movement made affects the breath and the choice of the right movements can help the respiratory system to heal once it has been compromised.

Guruji (Shri BKS Iyengar) would say that the gateway to health is a healthy circulatory system and healthy respiratory system but if one of these fails then disease will come to the body.

The programme begins with quiet, supported postures that bring relief to the lungs and follows through with postures that strengthen the immune system. It ends with a choice of relaxation positions. Everyone's recovery needs are different and not all of the postures will be suitable in the beginning, but as energy returns, more postures from the sequence may be added to provide a practice tailored to your needs. This programme offers a way back to good health.

The sequence is not comprehensive or exhaustive. We are continually learning new things, but at this point in time what we offer seems to be very effective for helping those who have had the virus.

For students who are seriously ill or have many complicated symptoms then a senior teacher, or where possible a therapy teacher, should be consulted.

If you have a fever don't practice - go to bed and rest.

There is no hurry - go slowly to get back to practice; if you go too fast you may have a relapse.

Weakness and fatigue appear to be a huge factor in how you feel during the recovery phase of this virus. Be patient and don't allow the practice to tire you - it should support you.

## **Abhijata Iyengar, when asked a question about what to do when suffering with Covid 19, responded with 3 points:**

- 1 What are the symptoms? Be guided by them.
- 2 Which are the affected areas? They have to be addressed
- 3 Go slowly to build the immune response - do not tire yourself; be patient and see what works best.

# PRONE ASANAS

## POSITION OF ASANA

To be prone means to support the abdomen, chest and head on a surface. It could be face down on a bed, face down on a floor, or on another suitable support eg along a bolster in Adho Mukha Virasana, along a table in Prasarita Padottanasana, along a bench in Ardha Uttanasana.

There are many examples in yoga where the front trunk is completely supported.

## BENEFITS OF BEING PRONE

Supporting the front trunk allows the back body to broaden and lengthen and the diaphragm to soften. This makes space for the lungs to work more efficiently. The back of the lungs has a denser network of air sacs (alveoli). Being placed in a prone position leads to an improved uptake of oxygen to the blood.

When the front trunk or the back spine are fully supported, the structure broadens, which releases tension in the diaphragm, allowing the vagus nerve to become less restricted, which in turn allows the parasympathetic nervous system to flow with ease. This calms both the emotions and the physical body. The heart and the gut will become calmer, reducing anxiety and fear.

## SECTION 1

Adho Mukha Virasana  
& Pavanmuktasana series**ADHO MUKHA VIRASANA**

anterior body and head supported

- Ensuring the back pelvis is the lowest part of the pose, extend forward with the entire trunk and head supported.
- Widen and spread the collarbones and sternum.
- Allow the brain to rest down towards the forehead.
- The weight of a blanket on the upper back makes it easier to work with the imprint of the breath on the back and sides of the ribs.

**This is restful, supportive and allows the back of the lungs to open and breathe more easily.**

**PARSVA ADHO MUKHA VIRASANA**

anterior body supported on thigh and bolster

- Spread the knees wider and turn the centre of the sternum over the right thigh, ensuring the entire trunk is supported, allowing the lumbar to extend forward.
- Extend forward with the arms to spread the side ribs, and breathe in and out of both sides of the back as evenly as possible.
- Repeat to the left side.

**This stimulates the kidneys, liver, spleen and areas where there is a high concentration of lymph nodes. It allows the ribs and side lungs to be lengthened and opened to get the breath into the sides of the body.**

**PARIVRTTA ADHO MUKHA VIRASANA**

side of the head supported, level with the spine

- Remove the bolster, reach the right arm perpendicular to the spine and place the left hand near the left knee. Support the head with the ears parallel and perpendicular to the floor.
- Ensure the right side of the back moves down towards the floor.
- Repeat to the left side.

**This increases flexibility of the intercostal muscles. It gives more movement to the lungs, intercostals and diaphragm promoting easier breathing for those who are ready for it.**

***Aim to hold these asanas for a minimum of three minutes but maybe longer depending on how you feel, your level of practice, your ability and the stage of your recovery. Remember to reflect and use your awareness to decide how long to stay. If for any reason kneeling on the floor is not an option for you, maybe due to knee, hip or back problems, or perhaps fatigue from the virus, there is an alternative in Pavanmuktasana.***





## PAVANMUKTASANA

using chairs or a bench

- Sit on one chair and go forward to a second chair.
- Rest the entire front body on bolsters/pillows and the forehead on a blanket.
- Elongate the front body to soften and allow the back body to descend.
- Support arms wherever they are comfortable, out to the sides or forwards.
- Hold 3-10 minutes.

**This is especially good for those who are very tired, and for knee, hip, ankle or back problems.**



## PARSVA PAVANMUKTASANA

using chairs or a bench

- Move the chair to the right side so the body turns.
- Going into it, press the bolster/s down and lift the body up to turn and go forwards and down onto the bolster.
- Repeat to the left side, moving the chair across.
- Hold 3-5 minutes each side.

**This helps to facilitate opening of the sides of the trunk allowing more ease of breathing.**





Preparing to come into the pose



## PARIVRTTA PAVANMUKTASANA

using chairs or a bench

- From Pavanmuktasana, take the right arm under and left hand back onto the back bar of the chair, or along the body.
- Keep the head in line with the spine, rest on the side of the head as the trunk turns.
- Repeat turning to the right side with the left arm underneath.
- Hold 2-3 minutes each side.

**This variation gives more movement in the chest and lungs increasing flexibility of the intercostal muscles and promoting easier breathing.**

### NOTE

If you are suffering from exhaustion you can set these Pavanmuktasana variations up with four chairs, one to sit on, one in front and one to each side. This way you can move between the variations without the effort of moving the props. For some people who have the fatigue that comes with this virus, this might be the only asana you can do in the beginning. Staying in each supported asana for a while will bring some relief.

***The asanas shown in this section, either kneeling version or chair version, would be the first ones to attempt in the first stage of recovery and these might be enough. Do not be afraid to take the support of the yoga props in order to be able to stay longer and allow the asanas to help heal you.***

# SUPPORTED STANDING ASANAS

## POSITION OF ASANA

The feet and legs are the foundation of the body. Standing asanas generally have a strengthening and toning effect developing stamina, strength and flexibility. Supporting any standing asana allows for the benefits of the asana without so much effort.

## BENEFITS OF SUPPORTED STANDING ASANAS

Supported standing asanas can energise physically and mentally and thereby lift one's mood. The featured standing poses are supported forward asanas which increase the blood supply to the brain, remove fatigue and tiredness and help to reduce depression. They calm the brain, remove strain from the heart and assist with easier breathing, alleviating breathlessness.

It is important to attempt the following poses only when one is strong enough. If there is trembling or shakiness wait until later in the recovery process.

# SECTION 2

## Adho Mukha Svanasana series



### ADHO MUKHA SVANASANA

#### with wall rope support

- Wooden bricks may be used to support the heels if the rope is too long to support them against the wall.
- Head to be supported sufficiently for the face and neck to release.
- Keep the hands and feet wide apart to enable the abdomen, diaphragm and ribcage to release and spread sideways.

**Using the wall ropes allows you to stay longer in this asana to reap the benefit of the extended chest and spine.**



### ADHO MUKHA SVANASANA

#### with hands on a height at a wall and head supported

- Hands supported at the wall, use any firm support (bricks, foams etc) that will lift your hands higher and give length and breadth to the chest.
- Keep the hands shoulder width or wider, lift up through the arms and move the legs back.
- While breathing without strain, open and spread the chest and move the shoulder blades into the body.
- Make the legs firm, the knees straight and move the heels down.

**Raising the hands allows easier lifting of the chest and sides of the torso.**

### NOTE

If the head feels too heavy then go for the following asanas taking the horizontal support (see Ardha Uttanasana - legs vertical with head on a chair or trunk supported horizontally, both feature on page 14).



# SECTION 3

## Uttanasana series



### ARDHA UTTANASANA

with wall rope and chair support for the head

- Adjust the height of chair seat to support the forehead, keeping the legs vertical.
- Keep the feet wide apart enabling the abdomen to broaden and lift.
- Rest the head, neck and arms whilst maintaining a lift of the thigh muscles.
- Soften the skin of the trunk and release the back muscles to extend forward.
- Feel the movement of the diaphragm and ribs and keep the chest broad allowing space for the lungs to spread at the sides and back.

**This is a restful asana whilst creating space. It encourages extension and muscle action without overtiring the body.**



### UTTANASANA

with buttocks at the wall, legs slanting and head supported

- Buttocks to wall, feet away from wall 12 inches or more.
- Take the feet wide apart, toes turned in.
- Legs straight and lifted up (if hamstrings are tight take a high support for the head).
- Extend torso over the legs.
- A bolster or thick rolled blankets can be placed at the top of the thighs, roll over the support to spread the lumbar spine.

**This allows the chest to roll forward over the legs supported by the wall.**





## ARDHA UTTANASANA

legs vertical with head on a chair or similar appropriate support

- With perpendicular legs rest the forehead on the folded arms such that the forehead feels supported (using extra height if necessary). This quiets the mind.
- Ensure the front thighs are lifted and firm to protect the hamstrings.

**This pose helps lengthen the spine to help balance the central nervous system.**



## ARDHA UTTANASANA

with trunk supported horizontally on a table top, right from the groin region (this being the best one when the head feels too heavy)

- Supporting the abdomen chest and head on table or similar.
- Can have a blanket placed on the back over the back lungs to bring awareness of breath in the back body.
- Hold 3-5 minutes.

**This is a very restful way of doing Uttanasana.**



## FULL UTTANASANA

using a wall (some but not all practitioners might benefit from Uttanasana with back supported at the wall). Not recommended for beginners and only for the later stages of recovery

- Walk in as far as possible and rest the back body on the wall.
- Keep the legs vertical, don't lean on the wall.
- Hold 1-2 minutes.

**This is a strong variation and should only be done when it brings relief to the practitioner.**

# SECTION 4 Prasarita Padottanasana series



## PRASARITA PADOTTANASANA

### with head supported

- Adjust the distance between the feet so that the legs are kept firm with the thighs back.
- Provide enough support for the crown of the head to rest.
- Resting the head, neck and face, keep a lifting grip on the knees and thighs without hardening the abdomen.
- The hands can be placed on the floor (or on additional height) wide apart, to broaden the back. Alternatively hold the ankles, lifting the shoulders away from the neck.
- Feel the breadth of the back body as you breathe making the skin and intercostal muscles soft without any strain.

**This wide asana brings width to the organic body, but be careful not to lean on the legs.**

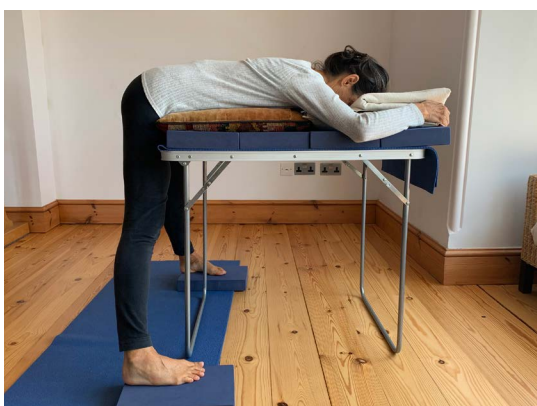


## PRASARITA PADOTTANASANA

### head and chest supported

- Legs vertical and wide, outer edges of feet parallel.
- Use a support under the chest, parallel to the floor.
- Support can be a chair or table, use a blanket or bolster on the chair, head supported to quieten the mind.
- Strong legs, breathe into the back.

**This allows firm leg work with the chest supported and extended.**



## PRASARITA PADOTTANASANA

### wide legs, whole anterior trunk supported horizontally on a table top or on bolsters placed on chairs

- Horizontal trunk resting on table or similar.
- Legs are wide apart, and it might require standing higher on blocks/bricks
- Hold 3-5 minutes.

**This version is more restful than the full pose.**



# PHYSIOLOGY OF ASANA

## THE LYMPHATIC SYSTEM

Lymph fluid flows through the body in a wide network of vessels and is important in taking white blood cells to areas where the body needs it most. Even though it removes toxins and stabilises blood volume its greatest role is immunity. The lymph ducts are found in the throat, armpits, breast plate, upper abdomen and groins. Releasing, broadening and opening these areas of the trunk will aid the flow of lymph. There is no pump for lymph fluid unlike the venous circulation which is pumped by the heart. Lymph fluid moves around the body by virtue of skeletal muscle action. Moving the legs from the groin and moving the arms from the shoulder pit greatly improves the flow of lymph fluid.

## THE THORACIC REGION

The thoracic region is where our lungs and heart reside. The ribs form the cage that protects the heart and the lungs. The floor of the cage is the muscle named the diaphragm. The muscles of the chest will become tight and restricted with anxiety, fear and fatigue. This inhibits the flow of breath, the pumping of the heart and the conduction in the vagus nerve. Reduction in competent breath work reduces oxygen uptake in the bloodstream, leading to breathing and heart problems and of course fear.

## THE AUTONOMIC NERVOUS SYSTEM

The autonomic nervous system controls the internal organs and the functions that are involuntary and actions that are subconscious, such as breathing, heartbeat and digestion. The sympathetic nervous system originates in the thoracic and lumbar regions of the spine. Broadening and lengthening these areas reduces anxiety and stress. The parasympathetic nervous system originates in the brainstem and sacral portion of the spinal cord. Lengthening the back neck with head supported and forwards, and broadening the sacral spine will reduce stress and panic.

## THE VAGUS NERVE

The vagus nerve runs from the brain, through the chest, feeding the heart, down through the diaphragm to the abdomen. It contains parasympathetic nerve fibre. This main nerve has many branches; neck, upper thorax, larynx, heart, digestive tract and many more. If there is restriction in the diaphragm, the conduction is inhibited, leading to a faster heart beat, quicker shallow breathing and 'butterflies in the tummy', which can lead to a general feeling of detachment, often progressing to depression and fatigue.

**Broadening the front chest, lengthening the front trunk, supporting the back spine, lengthening the neck and opening the armpits as in Upaashrayii all have a huge input on the chest area and the vagus nerve.**



# SEATED ASANAS

## POSITION OF ASANA

To do these asanas well one has to 'sit up' and not 'sit down'. Different leg positions are utilised which act as a firm foundation for the spine to extend upwards. These asanas bring composure to the body so that work with the breath can be safely done.

The "L-shaped" seated asanas in this section could be the most important part of the recovery practice for some people.

## THESE ASANAS ARE

**Samashrayii Dandasana** (supported sitting up)

**Upaashrayii Dandasana** (supported reclining)

**Adho Muhka Dandasana** (forward with head to chair or other support)

They are performed one after the other and then repeated with each of the different leg positions.

## BENEFITS

These asanas will be very helpful during the recovery phase of Covid 19. If you are very fatigued then, providing you set up your props before you start, you can spend quite some time moving between the different positions and leg actions, getting all the benefit of opening the front, back and sides of the chest, without too much energy expenditure.

They bring firmness in the body, steadiness to the mind and better circulation in the pelvic and lower spinal regions. The reclining and forward actions extend and expand the chest region for better breath control.

# SECTION 5

## Dandasana series



### SAMASHRAYII DANDASANA

upright in L shape with support of a backbender (Viparita Dandasana bench)

- Sit on a height and draw the buttocks right back.
- Pressing down with the hands on bricks, lift the chest up.

**This pose brings support and balance to the body's internal systems.**



### SAMASHRAYII DANDASANA

with chair support

- Sit on a suitable height so the front edge of the seat supports the lower-mid back ribs.
- Place a thin/flat bolster vertically between the spine and the two chairs.
- Sit upright with the sacrum in contact with the bolster and the feet apart.
- If available, place a weight or heavy object for the heels to push into.
- Press the hands down onto the blocks beside hips, keeping the arms slightly bent and shoulders down. This brings additional lift in the trunk.
- An alternative action is to take the elbows back, and press them down onto the chair seat to lift the ribcage and diaphragm.

**This asana can also be done sitting in front of the sofa - see the Baddha Konasana series.**



***Aim to stay for 2-5 minutes in each position before moving to the next in the series.***

# SECTION 6

## Upavistha Konasana series



### SAMASHRAYII UPAVISTHA KONASANA

- From Dandasana move the legs to Upavista Konasana still sitting upright.
- Hold 2-3 minutes before going directly to the next pose.

**Moving the legs wide brings openness for the lymph to circulate in the groins and lower abdominal region.**



### UPAASHRAYII UPAVISTHA KONASANA

- Keeping the legs wide in Upavistha Konasana recline back onto the support.
- Some adjustment of the bolsters and neck blanket might be necessary.
- Keep the sacrum secure against the support.
- Hold 2-3 minutes before going directly to the next pose.

**The reclining position brings more length in the front body and helps to calm the nervous system.**



### ADHO MUKHA UPAVISTHA KONASANA

- Bend forward onto a support, maintaining the leg position.
- Take the arms wide.
- Hold 2-3 minutes.

**The back body opens and the breath moves more easily in the back lungs.**



# SECTION 7

## Swastikasana series



### SAMASHRAYII SWASTIKASANA

#### with chair support

- Sit on a suitable height so the front edge of the chair seat supports the lower-mid back ribs.
- Place a thin/flat bolster vertically between the spine and the two chairs.
- Sit upright with the sacrum in contact with the bolster.
- Press the hands down onto the blocks beside the hips, keeping the arms slightly bent and shoulders down. This brings additional lift in the trunk.
- Hold 2-3 minutes or longer, before going directly to the next pose.

**Sit higher if the knees are high, if crossing the legs is not easy repeat the Dandasana variation.**



### UPAASHRAYII SWASTIKASANA

#### with chair support

- Add 2 bolsters and blankets (or similar materials) to the seat of the chair to support the head and neck.
- Recline back from the previous position ensuring the entire back body is supported and feels lifted.
- Ensure the head is not thrown back too far and the throat feels soft and open.
- Keep the sacrum and spine in contact with the bolster; adjust the supports as needed.
- The extended arms can be supported at the sides with additional blocks or blankets.
- Hold 2-3 minutes or longer before going directly to the next pose.

**The abdominal region is further extended in this variation which improves the lymphatic circulation.**



### ADHO MUKHA SWASTIKASANA

#### with support

- Position a third chair or some bolsters in front of you to support the head and arms comfortably, with length in the front body.
- Support the ankles with a rolled blanket, towel or foam blocks.
- Ensure the abdomen is soft and the back ribs are sensitive to the movement of breath within.

**Repeat Samashrayii, Upaashrayii and Adho Mukha Swastikasana with the legs crossed 'the other way'.**

# SECTION 8

## Baddha Konasana series



### SAMASHRAYII BADDHA KONASANA

Sitting with lower back to the sofa, bolsters or firm cushions behind for the reclining action, arms can be supported horizontally along the sofa seat cushions, and a chair in front for the forward action

- Using soft furnishings Baddha Konasana can be completely supported.
- Sit on an appropriate lift so the knees are not higher than the groins.
- Take care to support the lumbar spine so the back remains concave and the chest effortlessly lifted.
- Place support under hands to enable arms to extend down thereby lifting the chest.

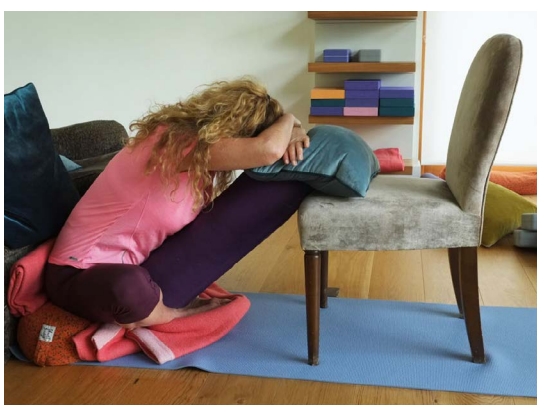
**The open groin action brings space in the pelvic area and encourages further movement of the lymph fluid.**



### UPAASHRAYII BADDHA KONASANA

- Recline back from the previous pose ensuring the entire back body, including the head and neck are supported.
- The back of the neck remains long enabling the throat to remain soft.
- The curve in the neck is a gradual continuation of the curve of the rest of the spine; ensure the head is not thrown back too far.
- The entire front trunk is open and lifted.

**Follow this variation with Adho Mukha Baddha Konasana but if that is not possible go to Adho Mukha Swastikasana as shown on the previous page.**



### ADHO MUKHA BADDHA KONASANA

- When bending forward, keep the sitting bones grounded ensuring an even extension throughout the spine.
- Ensure the abdomen is soft.
- Support the ankles with a rolled towel or blanket.

**This is restful and allows the breath to reach the back lungs.**

***In all these seated positions sit on an appropriate height so the spine lifts.***

### NOTE

Remember that the bonus here is the many lymph nodes in the area of the sternum, collar bones, armpits and lungs as well as the groins and abdomen are getting stimulated by the movements you do whilst practising these asanas, one after the other.

# SUPINE ASANAS

## POSITION OF ASANA

To be supine is to be on the back body with the face upwards, often with a support for the thoracic region and the head. Supports can be bolsters, benches, chairs, blankets or anything appropriate which allows the chest to be lifted and expanded, the abdomen to recede and soften and the head to rest.

Supine poses are often given in a restorative sequence. However for some people in the recovery process being supine can cause undue stress on the chest and lungs. A hard support such as a brick is not recommended, it should be a soft but firm support for lung issues. For anyone who finds these poses too much during the recovery phase, spend more time with the earlier sections above and include the reclining asanas and prone poses.

## BENEFITS OF SUPINE ASANAS

These are restful and restorative asanas, especially when you can stay in the supported pose long enough for the body to accept the actions and begin to let go of tension and tightness.

## URGENT NOTE

**Stop doing any asana if there are sensations of heat, tightness or any uncomfortable feeling in the area under and around the ribs.**

# SECTION 9

## Virasana series



### SUPTA VIRASANA

with bolster support for the back and blanket support for the head

- Use a bolster or equivalent (stacked blankets) behind the back, to prevent strain make sure the support is not pushed into the sacrum and lumbar spine.
- Place a blanket under the head and neck and lengthen the back of the neck.
- Sit up on a support (eg folded blanket) if there is strain in the knees.
- Put a support under the arms so the elbows and wrists are lifted and not dropping and causing strain in the shoulders.

**This pose opens the entire front chest and abdomen.**



### ADHO MUKHA VIRASANA

chest supported

- Ensuring the pelvis is the lowest part of the pose, extend forward over a bolster or equivalent (stacked blankets) with the entire trunk and head supported.
- Turn the head to one side and then the other side, if there is any strain then the head can also be straight forward with a blanket under the forehead.
- Widen the collarbones and sternum making sure the bottom sternum is in contact with the bolster.

**This pose encourages breathing into the back ribs.**





## SUPTA VIRASANA

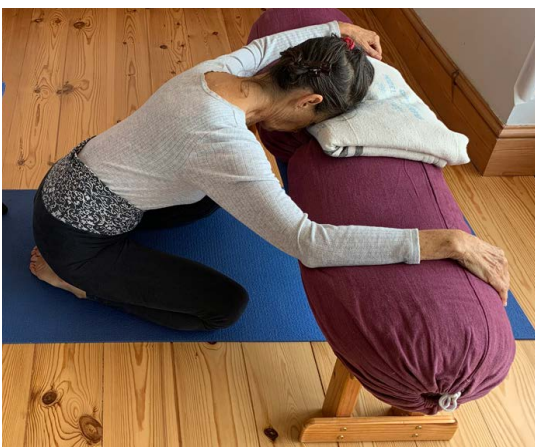
onto a chair

- Sit on a small height, a chair with blankets added for the back and head support.
- Palms can be on the thighs or onto blocks.
- Hold 2-3 minutes.

**This is especially good for those who find it difficult to go back onto a bolster.**



## ADHO MUKHA VIRASANA



- After coming up go forwards to rest the head with the arms wide.
- Hold 2-3 minutes.

**A restful asana which can bring relief to the lower back after the reclining variation.**



# SECTION 10

## Supine crossed legs series



### SUPTA BADDHA KONASANA

with bolster, blankets and hip supports as required

- Support outer thighs if comfort requires this.
- Allow front trunk to spread width ways by virtue of the position of the arms and legs.
- Ensure the head is parallel with the floor, not thrown back, nor with chin dropping into the neck.
- Belts can be used on the legs to keep the feet close to the body.
- Stay in the pose for 5-10 minutes unless you feel discomfort.

**This is a restful asana when it is correctly supported.**



### SUPTA SWASTIKASANA

- Lay on broad and low supports eg 2 folded blankets with additional support for head and neck.
- Support the outer thighs with rolled blankets or towels to release the hips and abdomen.
- Adjust the thickness of the blanket under the head and neck for length in the back of the neck, and no tension in the throat.
- Use an eye covering if available.

**Continue to the next pose before changing the cross of the Swastikasana legs.**



### ADHO MUKHA SWASTIKASANA

- Use 2-3 bolsters if available to support the head arms and chest.
- Sit on the blankets or more height, especially if spine doesn't extend forwards from the hips.
- Repeat Supta Swastikasana followed by Adho Mukha Swastikasana with the legs crossed 'the other way'.

**Allow this asana to refresh the body so take enough support and do not strain to go forward.**

**By following the supine asanas with either *Adho Mukha Virasana* or *Adho Mukha Swastikasana* you continue the theme of opening the back body and give a chance for your back lungs to breathe.**

# INVERTED ASANAS

## POSITION OF ASANA

To be inverted means to be in an upside-down position with the head down.

To be in any inversion stimulates lymphatic drainage. This plays a vital role in improving the effectiveness of the immune system. They are a huge part of the Immune System Programme (given in Yoga Rahasya - Compilation Edition for Yoga Therapy, Page 145), so we would expect them to have a big part in the recovery from this virus too.

We all know how important inverted asanas are for our practice and for our health however, there has to be caution and no-one should hurry back to full inversion practice until they are ready. One of the possible outcomes of this virus is a weakening of the circulatory system (orthostatic hypotension or LBP), and if present then inversion practice would not be recommended until the system was strengthened. So we would encourage the first inversion to come back into practice as Setu Bandha Sarvangasana.

## BENEFITS OF INVERTED ASANAS

Inverted asanas work as a panacea for many ailments. They work on the hormonal system of the body promoting health, whilst bringing discipline to the mind and calm within. They help to restore balance in the endocrine system and can have a positive effect on the entire body.

**Salamba Sirsasana** develops willpower and clarity of thought.

**Salamba Sarvangasana** builds patience and emotional stability, it soothes the nerves.

**Supported Halasana** is very restful. It soothes the brain and the nerves and can be beneficial when suffering from fatigue.

**Setu Bandha Sarvangasana** removes fatigue, rejuvenates the nerves and improves circulation in the chest region.

Regular correct practice of all of these asanas will help to relieve breathing difficulties and restore health to the lungs.

# SECTION 11 Setu Bandha Sarvangasana series



## SETU BANDHA SARVANGASANA

on 2 folded blankets (some people might not be able to fully open their chest in the early stages of recovery)

- A relatively low lift for the pelvis and back chest may be suitable when there is discomfort opening the chest .
- Blankets edge in line with the lower 'tip' of the scapulae to promote the side chest openness.
- Shoulders grounded and feet apart, pressing against the wall for stability and space in the body.
- Optional eye covering.

**Find the supports which allow you to find quietness in the pose so that healing can take place.**



## SETU BANDHA SARVANGASANA

on crossed bolster

Cross the two bolsters, horizontal bolster underneath with the vertical (spine wise) bolster uppermost, use a block under the top bolster to support the pelvis if necessary (see the photo).

- Both shoulders touching the ground evenly.
- Arms spread to the sides for maximum chest opening.
- Feet supported to the same height as the torso to keep the legs active.
- Feet can be lower down if the thighs remain down.

**This pose brings an openness to the top chest allowing blood to flow into the thyroid whilst the abdomen remains passive.**



## SETU BANDHA SARVANGASANA

on horizontal bolsters (the height of the bolsters can be varied for you to gain the best chest opening without strain)

- Blankets may be placed accordingly to promote full opening of the chest.
- Feet supported at the same height as the hips.
- Back pelvis skin should feel grounded and stable, not being slightly dragged towards head or heels.
- Weights can be placed on the thighs to open the chest further.
- To exit the pose slide backwards as shown in the photo.

**This asana gives broadness to the chest as well as a vertical lift.**



## ADHO MUKHA SWASTIKASASANA

with support

- Use 2-3 bolsters if available to support the head arms and chest.
- Sit on the blankets or more height, especially if spine doesn't extend forwards from the hips.
- Repeat Adho Mukha Swastikasana with the legs crossed 'the other way'.

**Allow this asana to refresh the body so take enough support and do not strain to go forward.**

### NOTE

Your recovery program would most likely conclude here in the initial stages, with prone Savasana to follow (see section 14), but when you are stronger then you should be encouraged to get back to your full inversions practice including Sirsasana and Sarvangasana. It is best to re-introduce these once Setu Bandha Sarvangasana has been practised and your system has gained strength. **Remember that Sirsasana, if included in your sequence, will come before Setu Bandha Sarvangasana.**



# SECTION 12

## Salamba Sirsasana series



### ROPE SIRSASANA

with Baddha Konasana legs - only to be done if you have already been taught how to do this work safely

- Hanging from ropes, rope support around the sacrum and pelvis not the lumbar spine.
- Feet behind the ropes in Baddha Konasana (when using wall ropes).
- Head supported on bolsters and arms crossed, switch the crossing after a few minutes.
- Variation: arms to sides and palms facing downwards to spread and release the shoulders.
- Take hands and head to the wall while standing after coming down in order to stabilise the blood pressure if feeling light headed.

**This is a supported inversion without any pressure on the neck.**



### PREPARATION FOR SALAMBA SIRSASANA

with 2 chairs and wall



- Place 2 chairs on non-slip mat with a gap large enough for the neck to pass comfortably between them.
- A crepe bandage may be wound around the temples.
- Place a bolster (or other stable support) to raise the feet off the floor and walk the toes closer to the chairs.
- The upper back should contact the wall and top of the shoulders are on the seat of the chair.
- Press the heel of both the hands near the seat edge to stabilise the trunk and assist the legs to lift.

**This variation takes weight off the head and neck but you must have the shoulders correctly supported on the chair seat.**



## SALAMBA SIRSASANA

with 2 chairs and wall

- Raise the legs and press them against the wall, using the arms to assist by pressing on the chair.
- Keep the waist back and the buttocks lifting upwards by stretching the legs upwards.
- The arms can be placed to rest on the seat of the chair *with the elbows bent and palms facing upwards*.

Stay for a short while and build up your Sirsasana practice on the chairs over time.

*You can also begin your Sirsasana practice at a wall or corner for stability after being unwell.*

### NOTE

If you have fatigue **take time to build your practice gradually**, stay only where you can remain steady. Remember that timings are not important after illness.

# SECTION 13

## Salamba Sarvangasana series



### SALAMBA SARVANGASANA

on a chair with Baddha Konasana legs

*Not for complete beginners*

- Place a sticky mat on your yoga chair plus one or two blankets/blocks according to body size.
- Have a bolster on the floor, by the chair legs with extra blankets on top.
- Have your legs in Baddha Konasana which will be less of a strain.
- Hold 3-10 minutes.
- Come down slowly in stages taking some time to rest in each stage.
- First bring your buttocks on the bolster and legs in Baddha Konasana on the seat of the chair.
- Then bring your buttocks on the floor and keep your legs on the bolster in Baddha Konasana or simple cross legs.

**This asana helps to circulate the lymph in the groins and armpits.**





## SALAMBA SARVANGASANA

with feet support at the wall

*Set up your normal Sarvangasana shoulder props but use your feet on the wall (back body facing the wall - see photo)*

- Take care not to slip back off your support as you get in to the pose.
- Stay with your feet on the wall for support and to help your trunk to stay lifted until your strength improves.
- You can pause and bring your buttocks down and then repeat by lifting back into Sarvangasana.
- When ready come to the full pose with both legs off the wall.
- Take rests from the full pose by taking your feet onto the wall.
- This variation makes it possible to sustain the inversion for longer.

**This method is very useful when there is fatigue when trying to stay vertical.**



### NOTE

The benefits of inversions are manifold. In this instance it is important to introduce them as soon as you are capable because they keep lymph fluid moving and reduce inflammation.





## ARDHA HALASANA

### with chair support for thighs

- Place a chair and add bolsters or similar supports so that the ankles will be slightly lower than the hips.
- Adjust the height of the bolster and blanket on the floor so that the mouth and throat feel soft and relaxed.
- If close enough to a wall the feet can be used, walking up the wall behind your back to elevate the pelvis before swinging your legs over to get the upper thighs onto the support.
- Rest the arms at the sides of the head with elbows bent and palms facing upwards. Keep the shoulders on top of the bolster.
- Release all grips in the limbs and feel the movement of the diaphragm and belly and the openness of the back ribcage with each breath.

**When the supports are correct this is a very restful asana which quietens the mind and supports the body systems.**

# PRONE SAVASANA

## POSITION OF ASANA

To be in Savasana is to be still and motionless but with a calm mind. Prone Savasana allows for better access to the back body and the back of the lungs. The limbs can be supported for ease of letting go.

## BENEFITS OF SAVASANA

This pose removes fatigue not only in the physical body but also in the nerves. It should be invigorating and refreshing and it is particularly essential to practice after illness.

# SECTION 14 Savasana series



## PRONE SAVASANA

on the flat mat with the forehead supported on a blanket, a small folded blanket can be used under the abdomen if it helps

- Blanket beneath the abdomen helps the buttocks to release away from the waist and for the lumbar to spread and lengthen.
- Forehead on a blanket and neck remains long.
- Spreading the legs apart allows your thighs to roll in with your heels rolling out.
- Hold 5-10 minutes.

**This should be a comfortable and restful asana.**



## PRONE SAVASANA

on a bolster

- The bolster supports your entire torso including the pelvis but only the very top of your thighs are on the bolster to encourage the back thighs to roll outwards.
- Forehead supported on blankets.
- Arms are bent to the sides on blanket support.
- Feet are as wide as the mat, with toes turned in and heels out in order to release the lumbar spine.

**Allows the back of the body to spread and release and encourages breathing into the back ribs.**



## PRONE SAVASANA

with 4 to 5 blankets

- Spread the 2 blankets on the mat with a small step at the edge supporting the pelvis so that the pelvic bones are supported and the front thighs rest on the mat.
- Lengthen the abdomen from pelvic to gastric region.
- Rotate the thighs making the toes turn in and back thighs turn out.
- The lower back and waist area broadens.
- Adjust the folded blanket under the forehead with space for the nose and length in back of the neck.
- Alternatively rest the head alternately on each side.

**The rolled blanket under the ankles helps this to be a passive action.**



## PRONE SAVASANA

lots of support including anterior body, head, ankle rolls and arms supported on blankets by the sides of the trunk

- The back brain relaxes on the front brain, massaging it.
- The front shoulders are fully supported with blankets, not allowing the chest to collapse.
- It is easier for the soft tissue on the front body to relax because it is in contact with the floor.

**A very restful version when the body and limbs are supported well.**

## NOTE ON PRANAYAMA

For those who already have a pranayama practice

Ujjayii pranayama could be too harsh on damaged lungs. Better to start with 'soft' Viloma. Soft because it is soft on the lung tissue when you take lots of very small in-breaths with short pauses, not trying to fill the lungs or to go fast. The sensation should be like taking small sips of a drink. This way the lungs are gradually expanded, without effort and the breath naturally becomes longer. However, if working with the breath makes you cough it is too soon to do this practice.

# FINAL MESSAGE

Looking at the overall sequence you can see the poses that have 'proning' in them, often with the armpits and groins involved to enable both the lymphatic system and vagus nerve. You can see the inversions allow the upper abdomen to drain, a key component in the lymphatic system. When seated, the differing leg positions involving the groins allow a sense of grounding, lymph drainage, and broadness to the trunk enabling a soothing effect to the mind.

The aim of all asana is to open, broaden and lengthen the body to enable the various systems inside the form to be as efficient as they can be, so the mind can become free of worry and rest in peace and calm.

Weakness and fatigue appear to be a huge factor in how you feel, during the recovery phase of this virus. Be patient and don't allow the practice to tire you - it should support you.

There is so much we don't yet know about Covid 19, the long term effects are yet to be discovered but what is certain is that you need to build up your immune system and yoga can help you with that.

Stay well, stay safe, practice and teach with awareness.

# END NOTES

The Therapy Committee (UK) would like to thank Abhijata Iyengar for her guidance in the way she has been teaching her virtual conventions, asking us all to take physical support and to be aware of our responses. We also thank Stephanie Quirk and Gulnaaz Dashti for their wise suggestions, and Lois Steinberg for her comprehensive respiratory sequence so generously shared. We thank Uday and Sonali Bhosale for their help filming and organizing the video which preceded this eBook. We also thank those teachers here in the UK who shared their invaluable experiences of recovery from the virus. The sole responsibility for the advice in this eBook lies with the Therapy Committee of IY(UK).

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*Lorraine, Larissa, Lynda and Edgar feature in the asana photographs.*

## DESIGN & PRODUCTION



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The Therapy Committee acknowledge that all of the supported asanas you will see are the results of decades of Yogacharya BKS Iyengar and Dr Geeta S Iyengar's creative developments of yoga in the medical classes at Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute, Pune, India.

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