

# Gentle Yoga for Backs

## Basic Exercises and Stretches

(Second Edition)

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## RULE NUMBER ONE

# DO NOT HURT YOURSELF!

If you find that an exercise or pose aggravates your pain SKIP IT!  
Everyone is different and not every technique will be appropriate for everyone.

## RULE NUMBER TWO

# BREATHE!

Relax and Do Not Hold Your Breath.

(Ideally doing Deep Diaphragmatic Breathing thru the Nose.)



*Legs-Up-the-Wall Pose  
Viparita Karani*

**LEGS UP THE WALL**

One of the most popular of all techniques.

Numerous variations involving the use of: Bolsters, Pillows, Blankets, and Different Leg Positions.

## LEGS UP THE WALL



**Legs Straight Up with or without a Bolster under Low Back or Hips**

## LEGS UP THE WALL



**Full Butterfly**



**"Splits"**



**Soles of Feet to Wall**

## LEGS UP THE WALL



**Half Butterfly (Left and/or Right Side) Up the Wall**

## CHILDS POSE

Knees Together or Apart

One May Bend Forward Straight Ahead Between the Knees  
Or to the Right or Left Side Over One Knee



# CHILDS POSE

## Variations



**On a Bolster**



**On a Chair**



# CATS

## SITTING CATS

INHALE- UP



EXHALE- SIT



(Back & Forth)





## CAT STRETCH aka "CAT/COW"

**INHALE- LOOK UP & DROP BACK**



**EXHALE- LOOK DOWN & ARCH BACK**

# CAT STRETCH

In A Chair



**INHALE- SIT STRAIGHT**



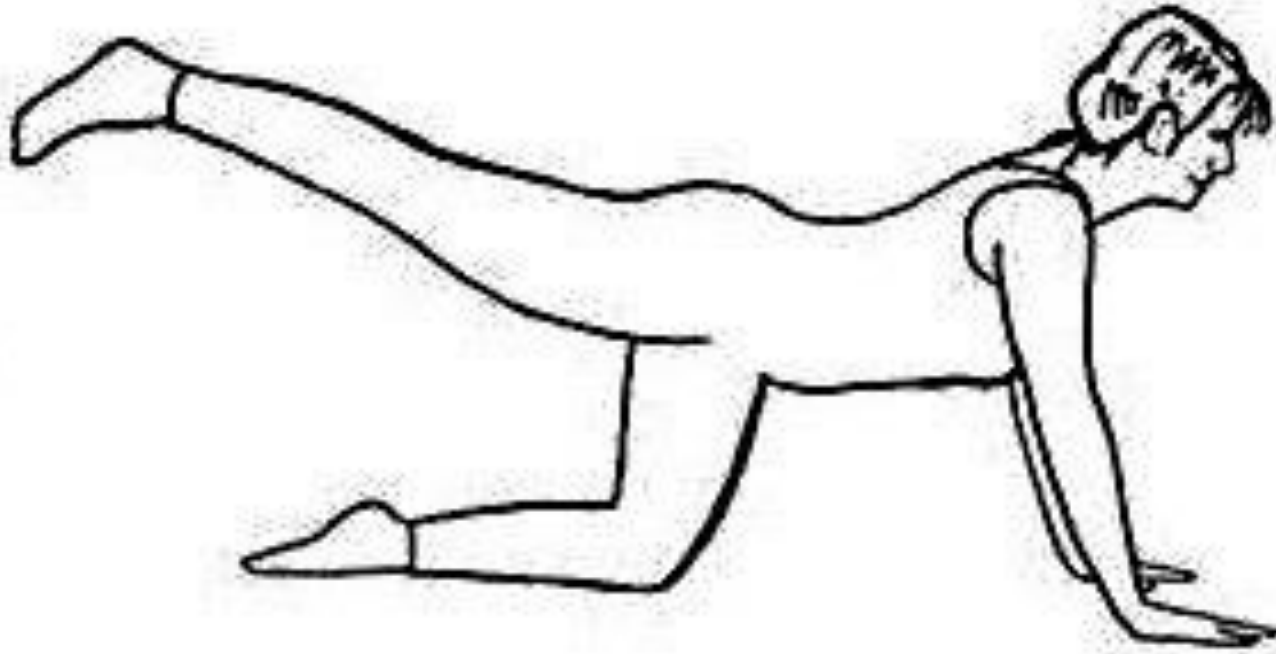
**EXHALE- SLOUCH**

## BALANCING CAT aka "QUADRIPLEX"



**Raise Opposite Arm and Leg (Repeat Other Arm and Leg)  
Static and Dynamic**

## TIGER STRETCH

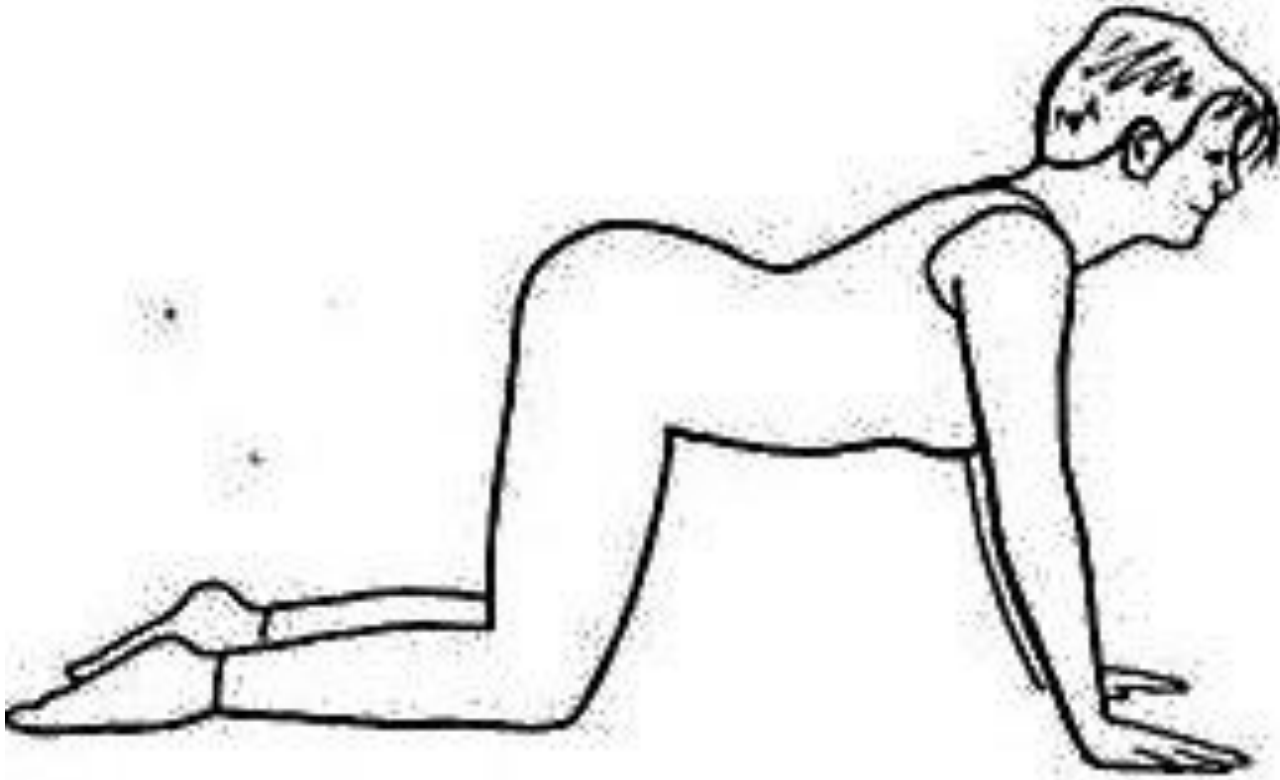


**Inhale**, stretch leg  
back and up, spine level



**Exhale**, bring knee  
toward chest, spine lifted

## “DRUNKEN” TIGER



**Inhale, center pose,  
squeeze thighs**



**Exhale, hips to side, feet  
opposite, toes forward**

Slowly Shifting Right to Left, Back and Forth

## TIGER'S TAIL



**Place Right Knee back onto Left Heel, Swing Right Foot Side to Side  
Repeat on other Side**

## THREAD THE NEEDLE





## EAGLE ARMS



**Arms Crossed as Tightly as Possible (Once or Twice)**

- 1. One may remain Still or**
- 2. Move Arms Horizontally, Right and Left or**
- 3. Raise and Lower the Arms Up and Down or**
- 4. Circle Arms Both Directions**

## SUPINE KNEES TO CHEST



### Single

Right Knee to Chest First so as to first massage Ascending Colon, stimulating peristalsis and helping to avoid constipation.

(To put less pressure on the Knee Joint, grab Hamstring instead of Shin. Left Leg may be bent for extra comfort)



### Double



## SINGLE KNEE TO CHEST

In A Chair

## BRIDGE



**STATIC- INHALE RAISE HIPS, HOLD SEVERAL BREATHS, EXHALE DROP HIPS**

**DYNAMIC- "ROLLING BRIDGE" INHALE- HIPS UP, EXHALE HIPS DOWN**

## PELVIC TILTS



**Lie on Back with Knees Bent. Engage Abdominal Muscles so that the Natural Arch in the Lumbar Spine is flattened against the Floor. Release allowing Back to Naturally Arch back Up again. (Repeat Back & Forth)**



## HAPPY BABY



**Supine  
Pull Feet Down**



**Seated**

## SINGLE LEG RAISES



**Supine**  
**(Bend Opposite Leg)**  
**INHALE- UP   EXHALE- DOWN**  
Hands may be placed under  
Low Back for added Comfort

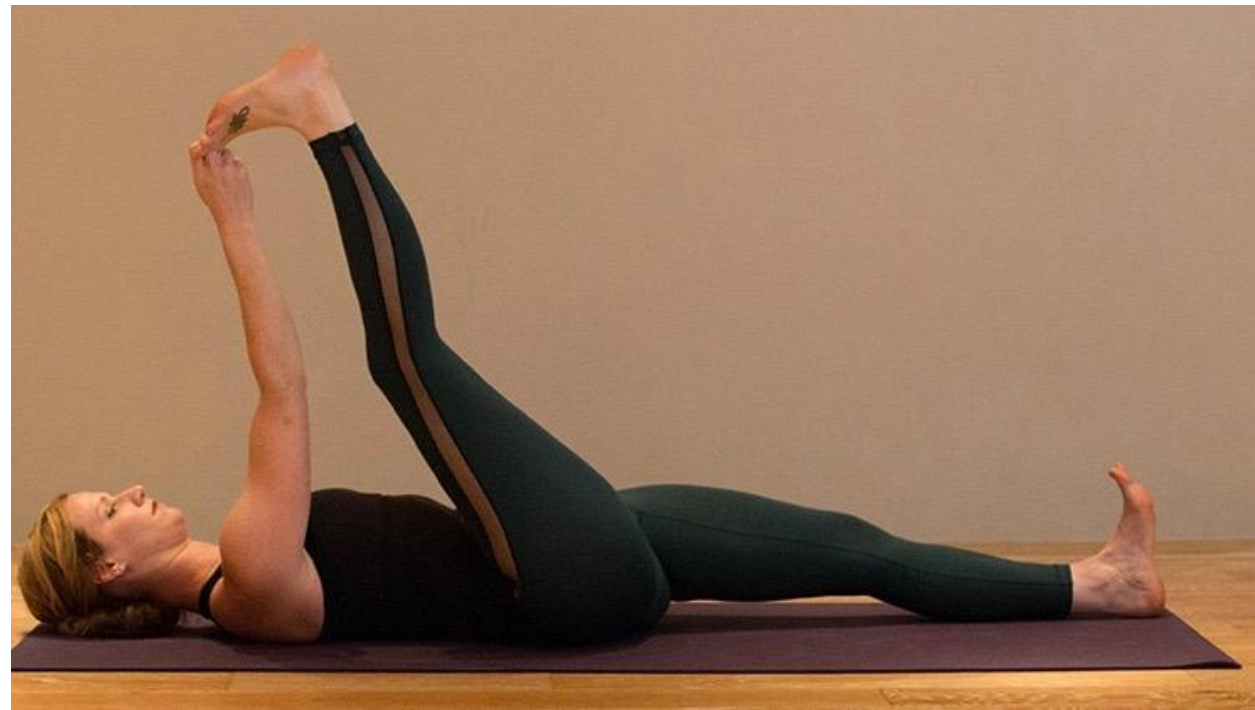


**Seated**  
**INHALE- EXTEND   EXHALE-BACK**

## SUPINE HAND TO FOOT POSE (Hamstring Stretch)



**With Strap**



**Without Strap**



## SUPINE TWISTS aka "BENT LEG BODY TWIST"



**Basic- Feet on Floor  
(Feet may be Together or Spread Apart)**



**Advanced- Feet off Floor**

**Slowly Twisting Right and Left, Back and Forth**

## SIMPLE TWIST In A Chair



## UNIVERSAL TWIST aka "SINGLE LEG OVER"



# CROCODILES



**Crocodile Head Down and Feet Spread**



**Crocodile Head Down & Feet Together**

## MORE CROCODILES



**Crocodile Head Down, Palms on Shoulders & Feet Spread**



**Crocodile Head Up, Chin on Palms & Feet Together**

## SPHINX



Sphinx Circa 2500BC



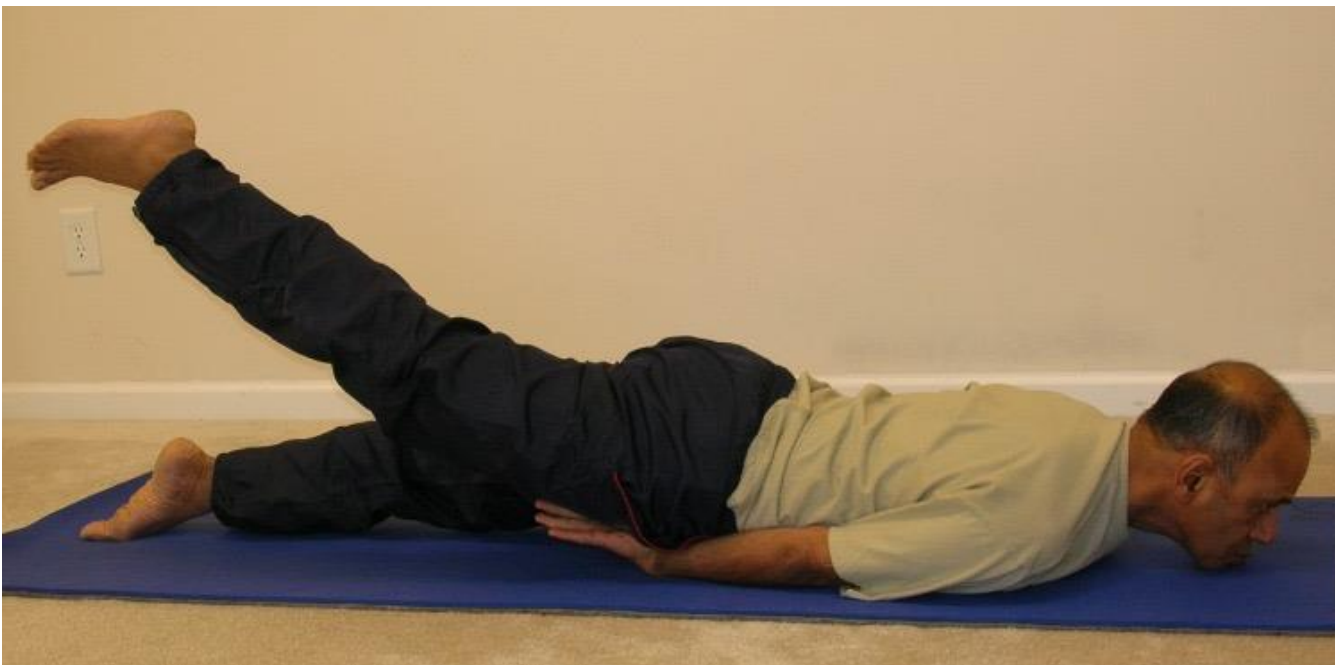
**Prone on Elbows**

**One may also Twist looking over Shoulder at Feet**

## AFTER SPHINX POSE, COUNTER STRETCH IN CHILDS



## HALF LOCUST



**BASIC**- Prone, Raise One Leg

Hands Under Thighs



**SUPPORTED**- Opposite Foot Braces Knee

or Hands Under Shoulders



## AFTER HALF LOCUST, COUNTER STRETCH IN CHILDS



## HALF BACKWARD BOATS aka "SWIMMERS"



Opposite Sides -Raise Right Arm and Left Leg (Repeat with Opposite Arm and Leg)

Same Side- Raise Right Arm and Right Leg (Repeat with Left Leg and Left Arm)

Static or Dynamic

## AFTER BACKWARD BOATS, COUNTER STRETCH IN CHILDS



## BUTTERFLIES



HALF

Flap Knee Up and Down, Circle Knee, Hug Knee, Cradle



FULL

Flap Up and Down, Push Knees Down, Bend Forward

## THAI BACK STRETCH



**1) Elbow to Knee**



**2) Elbow to Floor**



**3) Shoulder to Knee**

## HIP ROCKING IN MERMAID



**Hip Back**



**Hip Forward**



**Hip Back**

**Lean to Left Side and Rock Right Hip Forward and Back (Back and Forth)  
Repeat on Other Side**

# CIRCLE TORSO IN MERMAID

## Circle (Wobble) Torso Both Directions



Back



Right



Forward



Left



Back

**Circle Torso Clockwise Multiple Times, then Counterclockwise Multiple Times  
Reverse Leg Position and Repeat**

## FORWARD BEND IN MERMAID



**Bend Forward Over Forward Knee or Shin  
(Repeat on Other Side)**



## PREPERATORY PIGEON



**Elbows to Floor**

**From Mermaid Pose Extend  
Rear Leg Straight Back and  
Bend Forward Over Knee or  
Shin**



**Head to Floor**

## CRESCENT MOON



**With Chair**



## CAMELS



Half Camel- One Arm Up, One Arm Down  
This can be made Easier by being Up on Toes  
and with Knees Spread



Full Camel

## YOGA MUDRA



### **Seated Cross Legged:**

- **Lean Over Right Knee**
- **Lean Over Left Knee**
- **Lean Directly Forward**

## FLAPPING FISH



**On Side with  
Lower Leg Straight  
And Upper Leg Bent**



**With Bolsters and Pillows**

## CORPSE POSE



**Bolster Under Knees**

**Lying Supine with Body Completely Relaxed.**

**Imagine:  
“Melting Into The Ground”  
or  
“Floating In Air”**



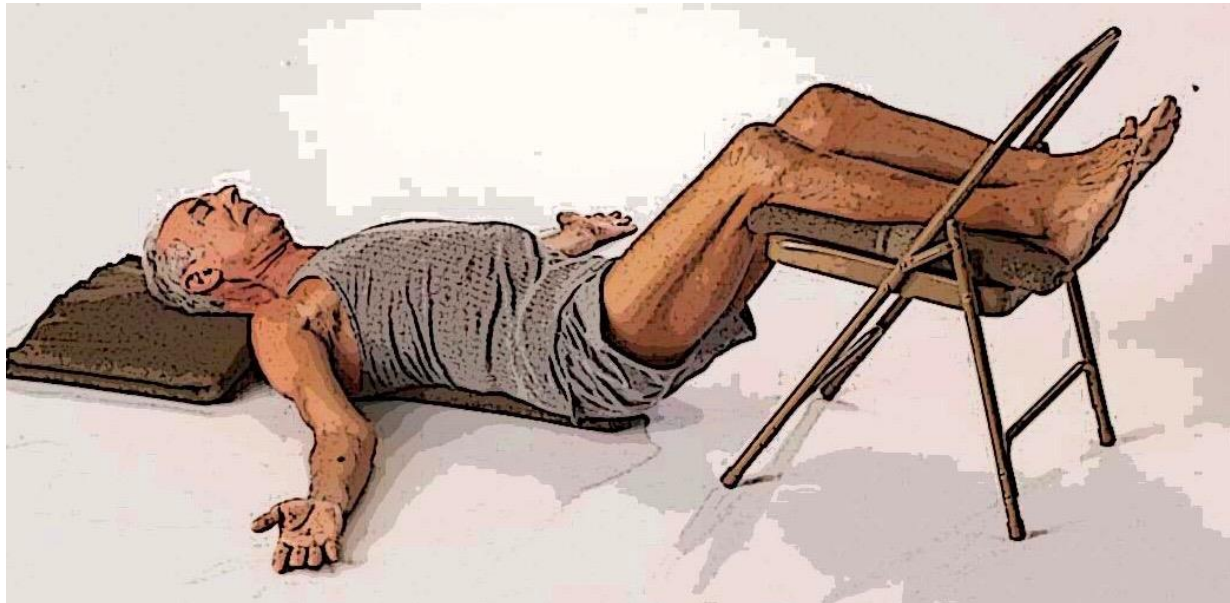
**Bolster Under Knees and Blanket Under Head**

### Watching 4 Parts of the Breath

- 1. INHALE**
- 2. PAUSE WITH FULL LUNGS**
- 3. EXHALE**
- 4. PAUSE WITH EMPTY LUNGS**



**With Bolsters, Pillows , Blanket & Eye Pillow**



**With Chair and Blankets**



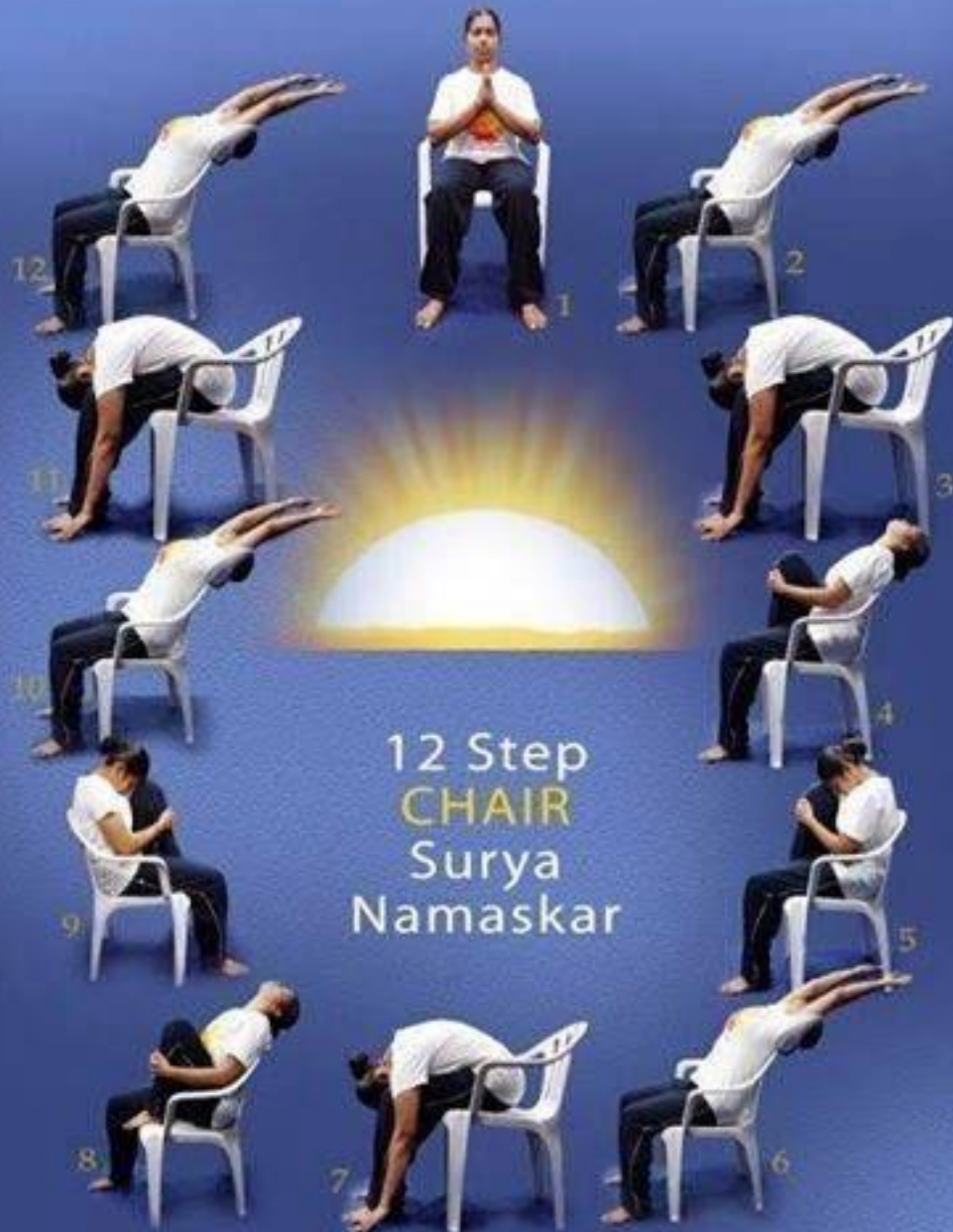
**“Deluxe Corpse”**



## SUN SALUTATION (Adapted to a Chair)

The Classical Indian 12 Step Exercise, Salutation to the Sun, done seated for those unable to perform the exercise the traditional way.

Not necessarily appropriate for everyone!



## RESOURCES

Gore MN, Vaze DR, Kulkarni SA, Oak JP. *Yoga Therapy for Selected Diseases*. Yoga Mimamsa. Kaivalyadham Yoga Institute. Lonavala, India. 2008

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