

# BASIC YOGA POSTURES<sup>1</sup>: BENEFITS AND PRECAUTIONS

## 1. Mountain Pose - Tadasana

- Benefits:** corrects bad posture by straightening the spine;
- improves the alignment of your body;
  - counters the degenerative effects of ageing on the spine, legs and feet;
    - tones the buttock muscles;
    - helps to treat depression;
    - strengthens the knee joints;
  - revitalizes the feet and corrects flat feet;
    - reduces sciatic pain;
    - prevents hemorrhoids;
    - improves bladder control;
  - tones and lifts the pelvis and abdomen.

**Precautions:** *If you have Parkinson's disease or a spinal disk disorder, you may find it helpful to stand facing a wall with your palms placed on it. People with scoliosis should rest the spine against the protruding edge of two adjoining walls. Do not practise this asana if you have stress-related headaches, migraine, eyestrain, low blood pressure, osteoarthritis of the knees or, bulimia. If you have a problem with balance, practise this asana with your feet about 25cm (10in) apart.*

## 2. Upward Hand Pose – Tadasana Urdhva Hastasana

- Benefits:** helps to treat depression and boosts self-confidence;
- tones and stimulates the abdomen, pelvis, torso and back;
    - relieves arthritis;
    - reduces sciatic pain;
    - strengthens the knee joints;
  - stretches the hamstring muscles;
  - corrects flat feet.

**Precautions:** *Do not practise this asana if you have stress-related headaches, migraine, eyestrain, low blood pressure, osteoarthritis of the knees or insomnia. If you have high blood pressure, do not hold the posture for more than 15 seconds. If you have a slipped disk, keep the feet apart. If you have prolapsed uterus, keep the tips of the toes together and heels apart.*

## 3. Mountain pose with fingers interlocked – Tadasana Urdhva Baddhanguliasana

- Benefits:** boosts confidence and helps to treat depression;
- relieves arthritis;
  - stretches the shoulders, arms, wrists, and fingers;
  - helps to treat spinal disorders;
  - tones and activates the torso, back, abdomen, and pelvis;
    - strengthens the knee joints;
    - reduces sciatic pain;
    - corrects flat feet.

**Precautions:** *Do not practise this asana if you have a cardiac condition, stress-related headaches, migraine, low blood pressure, insomnia, or osteoarthritis of the knees. If you have high blood pressure, do not hold the posture for more than 15 seconds. If you have a problem with balance, keep your feet 20cm (8in) apart. If you are prone to backache, have a slipped disk, or a prolapsed uterus, keep the tips of the toes together and heels apart.*

## 4. Mountain pose with the arms folded behind the back – Paschima Baddha Hastasana

- Benefits:** boosts confidence and helps to reduce depression;
- helps in the treatment of cervical spondylosis;
  - relieves arthritis of the shoulders, arms, wrists, and fingers;

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<sup>1</sup> Names of the postures are given in English and Sanskrit

- strengthens the knee joints and reduces sciatic pain;
- corrects flat feet.

**Precautions:** Do not practise this asana if you have angina, or stress-related headaches. If you have a slipped disk, keep your feet apart. If you have a displaced uterus, keep the tips of your big toes together and heels apart. If you have a problem with your balance, keep your feet 25cm (10in) apart.

### 5. Mountain pose with hands folded behind the back – Paschima Namaskarasana

- Benefits:** reduces depression;
- relieves cervical spondylosis;
  - increases the flexibility of the upper body, arms, elbows, and wrists;
  - strengthens the knee joints;
  - reduces sciatic pain;
  - corrects flat feet.

**Precautions:** Do not practise this asana if you have stress-related headaches, migraine, low blood pressure, insomnia, osteoarthritis of the knees, bulimia, diarrhea, or leucorrhoea. If you have high blood pressure, do not hold the posture for more than 15 seconds. If you have a problem with balance, keep your feet 20cm (8in) apart. If you are prone to backache, have a slipped disk, or a prolapsed uterus, keep your heels together and knees apart.

### 6. Mountain pose with hands in the shape of a cow's face - Tadasana Gomukhasana

- Benefits:** boosts confidence and helps to treat depression;
- alleviates cervical spondylosis;
  - improves breathing by opening up the chest;
  - strengthens the knee joints and reduces sciatic pain;
  - corrects flat feet.

**Precautions:** Avoid this asana if you have a cardiac condition, stress-related headaches, migraine, eye strain, insomnia, low blood pressure, osteoarthritis of the knees, diarrhea, or leucorrhoea. If you are knocked-kneed, keep your feet 25cm (10in) apart. If you have a backache, a slipped disk, a displaced uterus, or pain in the wrist, keep your big toes together and heels apart.

### 7. Triangle Pose - Utthita Trikonasana

- Benefits:** tones the abdominal organs;
- stimulates digestion, relieving gastritis, acidity, and flatulence;
  - massages and tones the pelvic organs, correcting the effects of a sedentary lifestyle or faulty posture;
  - improves the flexibility of the spine and alleviates backache;
  - reduces stiffness in the neck, shoulders, and knees and helps to treat neck problems;
  - tones the ligaments of the arms and legs and strengthens the ankles;
  - helps to relieve menstrual disorders;
  - reduces fat in the waist.

**Precautions:** Do not practise this asana if you have stress-related headaches, migraine, eyestrain, low blood pressure, varicose veins, or if you are depressed, or extremely fatigued. Patients with rheumatoid arthritis should avoid this asana. Do not practice during menstruation. If you are prone to dizzy spells, vertigo, or high blood pressure do not look at the raised arm in the pose. If you have cervical spondylosis do not look up for too long. If you have a cardiac condition, practice against a wall, do not raise the arm, but rest it along your hip.

### 8. Warrior Pose 2 – Virabhadrasana 2

- Benefits:** improves breathing capacity by expanding the chest;
- helps in the treatment of the prolapsed or slipped disk;
  - alleviates the condition of a broken, fused, or deviated tailbone;
  - reduces fat around the hips;
  - relieves lower backache.

*Precautions: Do not practise if you have a cardiac condition, palpitations, heartburn, or diarrhea. Women with menorrhagia and metrorrhagia should avoid this asana.*

### **9. Extended Side Angle Pose – Utthita Parsvakonasana**

- Benefits:** corrects misalignment of the shoulders and shoulder blades;
- relieves backache and neck sprains;
  - enhances lung capacity and tones the muscles of the heart;
  - makes the hip joint and spinal column supple;
  - relieves sciatic and arthritic pain;
  - strengthens the legs and knees, particularly the hamstring muscles;
  - stretches and tones the abdominal and pelvic organs;
  - stimulates digestion by relieving gastritis, acidity, and flatulence;
  - helps relieve menstrual disorders;
  - reduces fat on the waist and hips.

*Precautions: Do not practise this asana if you have stress-related headaches, migraine, osteoarthritis of the knees, rheumatic fever, varicose veins, low or high blood pressure, chronic fatigue syndrome, diarrhea, psoriasis, insomnia, depression, or bulimia. Avoid the pose during menstruation, premenstrual stress, or leucorrhoea. If you have cervical spondylosis, look up briefly in the final pose. Those with hypertension should look at the floor.*

### **10. Half Moon Pose – Ardha Chandrasana**

- Benefits:** rotates and flexes the vertebral joints, keeping the spinal muscles supple;
- tones the lumbar and sacral spine, relieving backache;
  - corrects misalignment of the shoulders;
  - helps relieve sciatica;
  - improves circulation in the feet;
  - relieves gastritis and acidity;
  - corrects a prolapsed uterus;
  - removes fatigue if is done against a wall.

*Precautions: Do not practise this asana if you have stress-related headaches, migraine, eyestrain, varicose veins, diarrhea, or insomnia. If you have hypertension do not look up at your arm. Look straight ahead.*

### **11. Intense torso stretch - Parsvottanasana**

- Benefits:** cools the brain and soothes the nerves;
- relieves arthritis in the neck, shoulders, elbows, and wrists;
  - strengthens the abdominal organs;
  - improves digestion;
  - tones the liver and spleen;
  - reduces menstrual pain.

*Precautions: Do not practise if you have high blood pressure or a cardiac condition. Avoid also if you have dysentery or an abdominal hernia.*

### **12. Downward-Facing Dog - Adho Mukha Svanasana**

- Benefits:** tones and relaxes the nervous system, and relieves depression and anxiety;
- relieves breathlessness, palpitation, extreme fatigue, and sunstroke;
  - stabilizes blood pressure and heart rate;
  - helps relieve chronic constipation, indigestion, and excess bile formation;
  - relieves arthritis in the shoulders, wrists and fingers;
  - reduces lower backache;
  - increases the flexibility of a hip, knee, and ankle joints, and strengthens the ligaments and tendons of the legs;
  - counters the damage to the cartilage of the knee or hamstring muscles, caused by jogging, walking, and other sports;

- strengthens the arches of the feet and prevents calcaneal spurs;
- calms the mind and gently stimulates the nerves;
  - checks heavy menstrual flow;
  - helps to prevent hot flushes during menopause.

**Precautions:** *Patients with rheumatoid arthritis should avoid this asana. If you have a stiff spine or high blood pressure, or are prone to recurrent headaches or varicose veins, always practice this asana with your head supported by a block. If you are prone to dislocation of the shoulders, ensure that your arms do not rotate outward. Do not practice this asana in an advanced stage of pregnancy.*

### **13. Forward Bend - Uttanasana**

- Benefits:** reduces depression if practiced regularly;
- cures insomnia and relieves mental and physical fatigue;
  - increases blood flow to the brain, soothing the brain cells and sympathetic nervous system;
    - regulates blood pressure and slows down the heartbeat;
      - relieves migraine and stress-related headaches;
    - tones the abdominal organs (liver, spleen, and kidneys);
      - relieves stomach ache by neutralizing acidity;
    - reduces abdominal and back pain during menstruation;
      - strengthens and stretches the hamstring muscles;
        - increases the flexibility of the hip joint;
  - strengthens the knee joint and its surrounding tissue and muscles.

**Precautions:** *Do not practise this asana if you have osteoarthritis of the knees. Patients with rheumatoid arthritis should avoid this asana. If you have low blood pressure, come out of the pose gradually to avoid dizziness. If you have a spinal disc disorder, ensure that your spine is concave throughout the asana. Those prone to dizziness should practice with the legs slightly apart.*

### **14. Intense Leg Stretch – Prasarita Padottanasana**

- Benefits:** reduces depression, boosts confidence;
- soothes the brain and the sympathetic nervous system;
    - energizes the heart and lungs;
    - reduces blood pressure;
  - relieves stress-related headaches, migraine, and fatigue;
    - tones the abdominal organs;
    - relieves stomachache by neutralizing acidity;
      - relieves lower backache;
  - strengthens the knee joint and makes the hip joint supple;
    - regulates menstrual flow.

**Precautions:** *Do not hold this asana for more than 1 minute if you are a beginner. If you have low blood pressure, come out of the asana gradually, to avoid dizziness. Do not tilt your head or compress your neck while practising this pose.*

### **15. Warrior Pose 1 – Virabhadrasana 1**

- Benefits:** relieves backache, lumbago, and sciatica;
- strengthens the back muscles;
  - tones the abdominal muscles;
  - relieves acidity and improves digestion;
  - strengthens the bladder and corrects a displaced uterus;
  - relieves pain and heavy flow during menstruation.

**Precautions:** *Do not practise this asana if you have high blood pressure or a cardiac condition.*

### **16. Staff Pose – Dandasana**

- Benefits:** relieves breathlessness, choking, and throat congestion in asthmatics;
- strengthens the muscles of the chest;

- tones the abdominal muscles and lifts sagging abdominal walls;
  - reduces heartburn and flatulence, improves digestion;
    - tones the kidneys;
- tones the spinal and leg muscles and helps to prevent sciatic pain;
  - lengthens the ligaments of the legs.

**Precautions:** *If your back has a tendency to sag, or if you have breathing difficulties rheumatoid arthritis, ulcers, or are experiencing premenstrual stress, practice this asana with the back supported by a wall. Practice against a wall during menstruation.*

### **17. Hero Pose - Virasana**

**Benefits:** reduces stiffness in the hip joints;

- reduces inflammation in the blood vessels of the legs caused by standing for long periods;
  - alleviates pain or inflammation in the knees and tones knee cartilage;
    - relieves gout and rheumatic pain;
  - improves circulation in the feet and tones the hamstring muscles;
- strengthens the arches of the feet, and relieves pain in the calves, ankles, and heels;
  - eases stiffness in the shoulders, neck, hip joints, knees, and groin;
    - alleviates arthritis of the elbows and fingers;
    - relieves backache and corrects herniated disks;
  - reduces the pain of broken, deviated, or fused tailbones;
    - relieves calcaneal spurs.

**Precautions:** *If you experience cramps in the legs while practicing this asana, stretch your legs out in Dandasana. If the ligaments of your knee are injured, use a blanket to support your legs, or sit on your heels. Avoid practising this asana if you have headache, or migraine. Avoid stretching your arms in this pose if you have a cardiac condition.*

### **18. Fixed Angle Pose - Baddhakonasana**

**Benefits:** stimulates the heart and improves circulation in the pelvic region;

- tones the spine, and the abdominal and pelvic organs,
  - keeps the kidneys and prostate gland healthy;
    - helps to treat urinary tract disorders;
  - prevents hernia, hemorrhoid and abdominal fistula;
- relieves heaviness and pain in the testicles, if practiced regularly;
  - alleviates sciatica and varicose veins;
- reduces menstrual pain, irregular periods, and leucorrhoea;
  - keeps the ovaries healthy;
- helps to open blocked fallopian tubes and reduces vaginal irritation.

**Precautions:** *Do not practice this asana if you have displaced or prolapsed uterus. Practice this asana sitting against a wall if you have breathing difficulties, rheumatoid arthritis, cardiac condition, or premenstrual stress.*

### **19. Upward-facing bent knee pose - Urdhva Mukha Janu Sirsasana**

**Benefits:** relieves lower and middle backache;

- reduces stiffness in the neck;
  - tones the kidneys and abdominal organs;
    - relieves hemorrhoids;
- massages the reproductive and pelvic organs, improving their functioning;
  - prevents prostate gland enlargement;
- regulates menstrual flow and relieves menstrual disorders;
  - corrects a prolapsed uterus.

**Precautions:** *Avoid this asana if you are tired, have low blood pressure, stress-related headaches, migraine, eyestrain or insomnia. If you have osteoarthritis of the knees, place a block under your bent knee.*

## **20. Head-on-Knee Pose - Janu Sirsasana**

**Benefits:** sharpens the memory;

- relieves chronic headaches, migraine, or eye strain;
- eases the effects of stress on the heart and the mind;
- gradually corrects curvature of the spine and rounded shoulders;
- eases stiffness in the shoulder, hip, elbow, wrist, and finger joints;
- relieves stiffness in the legs and strengthens the muscles of the legs;
  - helps to normalize blood pressure and reduces angina pain;
  - improves digestion;
  - vitalizes the adrenal gland and relaxes the thyroid gland;
- improves bladder control, tones the liver, beneficial for diabetes;
  - prevents enlargement of the prostate gland;
- reduces menstrual cramps, prevents fibroids and regulates menstrual flow.

**Precautions:** Avoid practising this asana if you have diarrhea. If your knees are stiff, or if you have osteoarthritis of the knees, practice with a wooden block under the bent knee. To protect your hamstring muscles from damage, always open out the knee of the outstretched leg completely, extending it evenly on all sides.

## **21. Three parts of the body stretch – Triang Mukhaikapada Paschimottanasana**

**Benefits:** tones and stimulates the abdominal organs;

- assists digestion and counters the effects of excess bile secretion;
  - reduces flatulence and constipation;
  - creates flexibility in the knee joints;
  - corrects dropped arches and flat feet.

**Precautions:** Avoid this asana if you have diarrhea. Do not twist your torso or allow it to lean towards the outer side of your extended leg, as this could strain your spine or abdominal organs.

## **22. Auspicious Pose - Swastikasana**

**Benefits:** rests tired feet and legs;

- reduces inflammation of the veins in the legs;
  - makes the hip joint and groin supple;
- strengthens the cartilage of the knees and relieves pain in the knees;
  - improves circulation and reduces inflammation in the knees.

**Precautions:** If your legs ache performing the asana, place a folded blanket under them.

## **23. Complete Boat Pose – Paripurna Navasana**

**Benefits:** increases the body's metabolic rate;

- improves blood circulation in the abdomen;
- tones the abdominal muscles and organs;
  - relieves indigestion and flatulence;
  - tones the kidneys;
- reduces lower backache by strengthening the spinal muscles.

**Precautions:** Do not practice this asana if you have a cardiac condition or low blood pressure. Avoid the pose if you have breathlessness, asthma, bronchitis, a cold and congestion, migraine, chronic fatigue syndrome, or insomnia, cervical spondylosis, severe backache, diarrhea, or menstrual disorders.

## **24. Seated Wide-angle Pose - Upavista Konasana**

**Benefits:** helps to treat arthritis in the hips;

- relieves sciatic and lower back pain;
- helps to prevent and relieve hernia, flatulence and improves digestion;
  - massages the organs of the reproductive system;
- stimulates the ovaries, regulates menstrual flow, and relieves menstrual pain and disorders;
  - corrects the prolapsed uterus or bladder.

**Precautions:** *If you have asthma, you must practice this asana sitting on a folded blanket close to the wall. Lift and open the chest allowing for easy breathing. Avoid this asana during pregnancy.*

## **25. Seated Forward Bend - Paschimottanasana**

**Benefits:** sharpens memory;

- soothes the sympathetic nervous system and prevents fatigue;
- rests and massages the heart, normalizes blood pressure and the pulse rate;
  - relieves chronic headaches, migraine, and eye strain;
  - reduces stress in the facial muscles;
  - tones the kidneys, bladder, and pancreas;
- activates a sluggish liver, and improves the digestive system;
  - helps to treat impotence;
- improves blood circulation in the pelvic area, toning the ovaries, uterus, and the entire reproductive system;
- regulates blood supply to the endocrine glands, activating the adrenal glands, and relaxing the thyroid gland;
  - strengthens the vertebral joints and stretches the ligaments of the spine;
  - reduces fat in the abdomen.

**Precautions:** *Do not practice this asana if you have asthma, bronchitis, or cervical spondylosis. Do not allow your thighs to lift off the floor.*

## **26. Downward-Facing Hero Pose - Adho Mukha Virasana**

**Benefits:** relieves breathlessness, dizziness, fatigue, and headaches;

- reduces high blood pressure;
- stretches and tones the spine, relieving pain in the back and neck;
  - reduces acidity and flatulence;
- alleviates menstrual pain and depression associated with menstruation.

**Precautions:** *Avoid practising this asana if you have stress-related headache, or migraine.*

## **27. Downward-Facing Cross-legged Pose - Adho Mukha Swastikasana**

**Benefits:** soothes the sympathetic nervous system, relieving stress and fatigue;

- relieves migraine and stress-related headaches;
- relieves palpitation and breathlessness;
- helps to prevent nausea and vomiting;
  - relieves pain in the hip joints;
- rests tired legs and improves circulation in the knees.

**Precautions:** *If you cannot sit in Virasana due to aching feet, you can practise this pose instead. If you have stress-related headaches or a migraine, wrap a crepe bandage around your eyes.*

## **28. Torso Twist - Bharadvajasana**

**Benefits:** makes the spinal muscles supple;

- relieves arthritis in the lower back;
- reduces stiffness in the neck and shoulders;
  - alleviates rheumatism of the knees;
- reduces pain in the hip joints, calves, heels, and ankles;
  - makes the hamstrings supple;
  - exercises the abdominal muscles;
- helps to treat disorders of the kidneys, liver, spleen, and gall bladder;
  - improves digestion and relieves flatulence;
  - tones the muscles of the uterus.

**Precautions:** *Avoid this asana if you have bronchitis, headaches or migraine. Do not practice this asana if you have a cardiac condition, severe eyestrain, chronic fatigue syndrome, depression, or insomnia.*

### **29. Torso and Leg Stretch A – Marichyasana A**

**Benefits:** alleviates lower backache and cervical spondylosis;

- increases blood circulation to the abdominal organs;
- aids digestion and reduces flatulence;
- helps in treatment of hernia;
- tones and massages the liver and kidneys.

**Precautions:** Do not practice this asana if you have a cardiac condition, headache, migraine, a cold or chest congestion, diarrhea, constipation, chronic fatigue syndrome, insomnia, or depression.

### **30. Torso and Leg Stretch C – Marichyasana C**

**Benefits:** increases energy levels;

- tones and massages the abdominal organs;
- improves the functioning of the liver, spleen, pancreas, kidneys, and intestines;
- reduces fat around the waistline;
- alleviates backache;
- relieves lumbago.

**Precautions:** Do not practice this asana if you have diarrhea or dysentery. Avoid this pose if you have a headache, migraine, insomnia, or when you are feeling fatigued. Do not practice during menstruation or pregnancy.

### **31. Side Twist in the Hero Pose - Parsva Virasana**

**Benefits:** improves digestion and cures flatulence by exercising the abdominal muscles;

- relieves lower backache;
- alleviates gout, rheumatism, and inflammation of the knees;
- lessens stiffness in the hip joints, and makes the hamstrings supple;
- reduces pain in the calves, ankles, and heels;
- strengthen the arches of the feet and corrects flat feet or calcaneal spurs;
- releases a catch or sprain in the shoulders and neck.

**Precautions:** Avoid practising this asana if you have stress-related headache, migraine, severe eyestrain, bronchitis, a cold and congestion in the chest, or diarrhea. Do not practice if you are prone to depression, extreme fatigue, or insomnia.

### **32. Headstand – Salamba Sirsasana**

**Benefits:** builds stamina;

- alleviates insomnia;
- reduces the occurrence of heart palpitations;
- helps to cure halitosis;
- strengthens the lungs;
- improves the function of the pituitary and pineal glands;
- increases the hemoglobin content in the blood;
- relieves the symptoms of colds, coughs, and tonsillitis;
- brings relief from digestive and eliminatory problems, when practised in conjunction with Salamba Sarvangasana.

**Precautions:** Do not practise this asana if you have high blood pressure, cervical spondylosis, a backache, headache, or migraine. Do not start your yoga session with this pose if you have low blood pressure. Perform the asana only once in a session and do not repeat it – your body should not be overworked. Do not practise this asana during menstruation.

### **33. Shoulder Stand – Salamba Sarvangasana**

**Benefits:** alleviates hypertension;

- relieves insomnia and soothes the nerves;
- improves the functioning of the thyroid and parathyroid glands;
- alleviates asthma, bronchitis and throat ailments;
- relieves breathlessness and palpitations;

- helps to treat colds and sinus blockages;
- improves bowel movements and relieves colitis;
  - helps to treat hemorrhoids;
  - alleviates urinary disorders;
  - helps to treat hernia;
- helps to treat a prolapsed uterus and reduces uterine fibroids;
- relieves congestion and heaviness in the ovaries, and helps to treat ovarian cysts;
  - reduces menstrual cramps and helps to regulate menstrual flow.

**Precautions:** Do not practise this pose during menstruation. People with high blood pressure should only attempt this asana immediately after holding the pose of Halasana for at least 3 minutes.

### 34. Plough Pose – Halasana

**Benefits:** relieves fatigue and boosts energy levels;

- controls hypertension;
- rejuvenates the abdominal organs and improves digestion;
  - lengthens the spine and improves its alignment;
- helps to treat hernia and hemorrhoids, if practised with legs separated;
- relieves pain and cramps in the fingers, hands, wrists, elbows, and shoulders, if practised with arms and interlocked fingers extended behind the back.

**Precautions:** Do not practise this asana if you have ischemia, cervical spondylosis, or diarrhea. Avoid this pose during menstruation. If you are prone to headaches, migraine, asthma, breathing difficulties, high blood pressure, physical and mental fatigue, or are overweight, practise Halasana with props and with your eyes closed.

### 35. Inverted Pose – Viparita Karani

**Benefits:** regulates blood pressure;

- helps to treat cardiac disorders;
- helps to treat ear and eye ailments, stress-related headaches, and migraine;
- relieves palpitation, breathlessness, asthma, bronchitis, and throat ailments;
  - alleviates arthritis and cervical spondylosis;
  - relieves indigestion, diarrhea, and nausea;
  - helps to treat kidneys disorders;
  - prevents varicose veins.

**Precautions:** Do not practise during menstruation, although at other times this asana alleviates menstrual disorders. Make sure that you rest your neck and shoulders firmly on the floor.

### 36. Bridge Pose - Setu Bandha Sarvangasana

**Benefits:** helps to prevent arterial blockages or cardiac arrest by resting the heart muscles and increasing blood circulation to the arteries;

- combats fluctuating blood pressure, hypertension, and depression by soothing the brain and expanding the chest;
- relieves eye or ear ailments, migraine, stress-related headaches, nervous exhaustion, and insomnia;
  - improves digestion and strengthens the abdominal organs;
  - relieves backache, strengthens the spine, and relieves neck strain.

**Precautions:** Do not practise this asana if you have any recent or chronic injury of legs, hips, neck, and arms or have any sort of neck or lower back problem.

### 37. Inverted Staff Pose – Viparita Dandasana

**Benefits:** soothes and relaxes the brain;

- builds up emotional stability and self-confidence;
- stimulates the adrenal, thyroid, pituitary and pineal glands;
- gently massages and strengthens the heart, preventing arterial blockage;
  - increases lung capacity;

- relieves indigestion and flatulence;
- increases the flexibility of the spine;
  - alleviates lower backache;
- corrects a displaced bladder and prolapsed uterus;
- relieves menstrual pain and helps to treat the symptoms of menopause.

**Precautions:** Do not practice this asana during the attack of migraine. Avoid the pose if you have stress-related headaches, eyestrain, constipation, diarrhea, or insomnia. Discontinue the asana if you feel dizzy. If you suffer from backache, you must practise a few twists before and after this pose.

### **38. Camel Pose – Ustrasana**

**Benefits:** helps to correct posture;

- increases lung capacity;
- improves blood circulation to all the organs of the body;
  - tones the muscles of the back and spine;
- removes stiffness in the shoulders, back, and ankles;
  - relieves abdominal cramps;
  - regulates menstrual flow.

**Precautions:** Do not practice this asana if you have severe constipation, diarrhea, headaches, migraine, or hypertension.

### **39. Upward Bow Pose – Urdhva Dhanurasana**

**Benefits:** prevents the arteries of the heart from thickening, and ensures healthy blood circulation throughout the body;

- tones the spine;
- strengthens the abdominal and pelvic organs;
- stimulates the pituitary, pineal, and thyroid glands;
  - prevents prolapse of the uterus;
- helps to prevent excess menstrual flow and eases menstrual cramps.

**Precautions:** Do not practice this asana if your blood pressure is too high or too low. Avoid this pose if you have constipation or diarrhea, or when you are feeling tired. Do not practise during an attack of migraine or a severe headache. If you have a cardiac condition or ischemia, practise Viparita Dandasana instead of this pose.

### **40. Reclining Big Toe Pose - Supta Padangusthasana**

**Benefits:** helps recovery from a cardiac condition;

- removes stiffness in the lower back, and relieves backache, by helping to align the pelvic area;
- prevents hernia and strengthens the abdominal organs;
- helps to treat osteoarthritis of the hip and the knees by stretching the hamstrings and calf muscles, and strengthening the knees;
- strengthens the hip joint and tones the lower spine;
  - relieves sciatic pain;
- helps to relieve menstrual discomfort such as cramps, heavy bleeding, or pain during menstruation;
  - reduces fat in the waist and hips.

**Precautions:** Do not practice this asana if you have asthma, bronchitis, stress-related headaches, migraine or eyestrain. If you have high blood pressure, place a folded blanket under your head and neck. Avoid during pregnancy.

### **41. Reclining Fixed Angle Pose – Supta Baddhakonasana**

**Benefits:** regulates blood pressure;

- prevents hernia as the hips and groin become more supple;
  - relieves lower backache;
  - relieves varicose veins and sciatica;
- reduces the pain caused by hemorrhoids;
- relieves indigestion and flatulence;

- tones the kidneys and improves poor bladder control;
- improves blood circulation in the ovarian region, and is particularly beneficial during puberty and menopause;
  - alleviates menstrual pain and leucorrhoea;
    - corrects a prolapsed uterus.

**Precautions:** *If you feel any strain while getting into the pose, use the bolsters.*

#### **42. Reclining Hero Pose – Supta Virasana**

- Benefits:** helps to reduce cardiac disorders;
- stretches the abdomen, back, and waist;
  - relieves rheumatism and pain in the upper, middle, and lower back;
    - eases gout and osteoarthritis of the knees;
      - aids digestion after a heavy meal;
      - soothes acidity and stomach ulcers;
      - relieves the symptoms of asthma;
  - reduces the menstrual pain and helps treat disorders of the ovaries.

**Precautions:** *Those with arthritis of the ankles, or spinal disk disorders should practise this asana with props. Women should place a bolster under the back during menstruation.*

#### **43. Corpse Pose - Shavasana**

- Benefits:** removes physical and mental fatigue and chronic fatigue syndrome;
- relaxes and soothes the sympathetic nervous system;
  - helps to treat high blood pressure, relieves migraine and stress-related headaches and brings peace of mind;
    - alleviates the symptoms of respiratory diseases and eases breathing;
      - speeds recuperation after all long-term and serious illness;
  - helps toward refreshing, dreamless sleep, especially for those with sleep disorders.

**Precautions:** *If you are pregnant, have a respiratory ailment, or experience anxiety, practice Shavasana with your head and chest raised on a pillow. If you have a backache, lie with your back on the floor, and rest your calves on the seat of a chair, with your thighs perpendicular to the floor.*