



**Bikram's**  
Yoga College of India  
*houston*

**Media & Press Kit 2008**

## About Bikram Choudhury

Yogiraj Bikram Choudhury is the founder of the worldwide Yoga College of India™. Born in Calcutta in 1946, Bikram began Yoga at the age of four with India's most-renowned physical culturist at that time, Bishnu Ghosh, the younger brother of Paramahansa Yogananda (Author of the most popular book on Yoga, *The Autobiography of a Yogi*, and founder of the Self-Realization Fellowship in Los Angeles).

Bikram practiced Yoga at least four to six hours every day at Ghosh's College of Physical Education in Calcutta. At the age of thirteen, he won the National India Yoga Championship. He was undefeated for the following three years and retired as the undisputed All-India National Yoga Champion.

At seventeen, an injury to his knee during a weight-lifting accident brought the prediction from leading European doctors that he would never walk again. Not accepting their pronouncement, he had himself carried back to Bishnu Ghosh's school, for he knew that if anyone could help to heal his knee, it was his teacher. Six months later, his knee had totally recovered. Ghosh was a celebrated physical culturist and the first to scientifically document Yoga's ability to cure chronic physical ailments and heal the body.

Bikram was asked by Ghosh to start several Yoga schools in India. The schools were so successful that at Bishnu's request

"Mike and Joani have exceeded my expectations in creating a place for learning and healing through Bikram Yoga. They represent my yoga to its fullest. I know that Bikram Yoga students and teachers alike will find a home at their BYCOI. Having a foundation for consistency in my yoga is critical to the progress of both students and teachers alike."

- Bikram Choudhury

## **Mike Winter and Joani Nunez Studio Directors- Houston, TX**

Mike and Joani are on the faculty of Bikram's Teacher Training and spend several weeks at each training assisting Bikram and his International Headquarters' staff. Throughout the year, they provide support, information, apprenticeships and guidance to certified Bikram Yoga teachers from around the world.

Joani Nunez, Fountainview director is one of Houston's most loved and respected alternative healers and intuitives. She has been in private practice in Houston since 1983, and brings a vast body of knowledge to her teaching. She began studying yoga and meditation in 1971 while still in high school, has been a student of Gurumayi Chidvilasananda for many years, and grew up near the Siddha Yoga ashram in the Catskill Mountains of NY. Joani discovered Bikram Yoga in 1999 and soon experienced miraculous results healing long standing and debilitating back, neck and shoulder injuries. Her personal experiences with the powerful healing effects of Bikram's Therapeutic Hatha Yoga are what led her to take the Teacher Certification Training. She is both delighted and grateful to be able to offer to others the same healing that she herself received practicing Bikram's Therapeutic Hot Yoga.

Mike Winter, South Blvd. director is Bikram Choudhury's senior teacher in Texas, director of the Yoga Colleges of India - Houston, and the founder of the original Bikram affiliated school in Texas. He is a Bikram Certified Therapeutic Hatha (Hot Yoga) teacher teacher and was intensely and personally trained by Bikram Choudhury at his Teacher Training School in Beverly Hills, Ca. The extensive, three month training consisted of a minimum of three hours a day of yoga and six hours or more a day of posture clinics, plus lectures by doctors and specialists on anatomy, physiology, yoga philosophy, and the integration of medical and logic systems. Mike began studying natural healing, nutrition and

# FAQ'S

## ABOUT BIKRAM YOGA

### **Q. Why is it important to learn from a Bikram Yoga Certified Instructor?**

**A.** It takes more than a hot room and a list of postures to make your Bikram Method Yoga practice a safe, rewarding experience. Bikram Method Yoga is a specialized form of yoga, requiring appropriate training and knowledge to teach it effectively.

Bikram Choudhury, the creator of Bikram Yoga, personally trains and certifies his instructors to ensure that his methods and philosophy are preserved and properly taught. To be certified as an instructor in the Bikram Method of Yoga, an instructor must complete an intensive nine-week training session requiring over 500 hours of study. A studio guided by a Certified Instructor provides the best possible instruction in the Bikram Method. Certified Instructors have a continuing connection to Bikram Choudhury and his training staff, allowing the Certified Studio to draw from all of the resources Bikram's training center has to offer. This includes special seminars, posture clinics, guest instructors, and answers to questions which may arise in a particular practitioner's Bikram Yoga practice.

Many can claim that they teach "Bikram Yoga," but unless there is a Certified Instructor supervising how and what is taught at that studio, you are not getting true the Bikram Yoga.

### **Q. How does Bikram Yoga work?**

**A.** By the tourniquet effect: stretching, balancing (using gravity), and creating pressure all at the same time. The blood supply in arteries and veins is being cut off, creating pressure.

When released, a lock gate effect is created, causing blood to rush through veins and arteries, flushing them out. Also, pressure is applied to the heart by its relative position to the rest of the body.

## Q. What is happening to the body during Bikram Yoga?

**A.** Muscles are contracted and stretched at a cellular, biochemical level. Lipids and proteins reorganize optimally in such stretching, allowing for better circulation. Joint mobility and range of motion is increased, and strength is built by the use of gravity. Muscles and joints are balanced.

Blood and calcium are brought to the bones. Working against gravity strengthens the bones. The organs of the immune system within the bones (red marrow) are boosted.

The lymph nodes are massaged, lymph is pumped throughout the body, and white blood cells are distributed throughout the body as the lymphatic system works more efficiently.

There is compression and extension to the thymus, spleen, appendix and intestines; lungs are stretched and flushed out by increased blood circulation. The endocrine glands are encouraged to secrete appropriate hormones, and the communication between hormones and various glands and systems of the body is perfected. Toxins and waste are eliminated through the organs of elimination.

The nerves are stimulated by compression and extension, improving communication within the systems of the body and supplying fresh blood, oxygen and nutrients throughout. The brain is stimulated by improved circulation and by varying blood pressure.

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### Q. What are the benefits of the heat & humidity in the practice of Bikram Yoga.

**A.** The recommended temperature is minimum 105F degrees and about 40% humidity.

The room is kept at this temperature or more for the following:

- Keeping the body from overheating (contrary to popular misconception)
- Protecting the muscles to allow for deeper stretching
- Detoxing the body (open pores to let toxins out)
- Thinning the blood to clear the circulatory system
- Increasing heart rate for better cardiovascular workout
- Improving strength by putting muscle tissue in optimal state for reorganization
- Reorganize the lipids (fat) in the muscular structure

### Q. Is Bikram Yoga beneficial for emotional balance?

**A.** Bikram Yoga helps balance the emotions in several ways.

Physiologically, regular practice harmonizes the nervous and endocrine systems, two systems which figure heavily in emotional well-being.

In addition, practicing Bikram Yoga cultivates the mental faculties of faith, self-control, concentration, determination, and patience. As we become more aware of our inner life, we notice how events, interactions, and even the atmospheric pressure effect us. When we are aware, we can exercise choice in our response. This helps us balance our emotional life.

# FAQ'S, GUIDELINES & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FIRSTTIMERS

**Q. feel nauseous, dizzy during class and very tired after my first class. Is this normal?**

A. It is not unusual to feel nauseous or dizzy during your first class. Practicing yoga in a heated room reveals to us our present condition, and inspires us take much better care of ourselves.

Usually the problem is that we do not drink enough water for daily living, let alone for exercising in a heated room. Nutritionists tell us that we need 64-80 ounces of water a day to help the body function properly.

In the heated yoga room, your body needs adequate fund of water to allow perspiration to release heat from the body as you practice. So we estimate you need another 64-80 ounces (sometime during the day) to allow for your 90 minutes in the room. Once you are drinking enough water your body will tolerate the heat better and you will actually enjoy the heat.

If you feel disoriented or like you need a good nap after your first few classes, this is likely because your body has begun to cleanse itself as a result of the yoga practice. Don't be scared. After the first few classes this sensation will pass. The more you can relax as you give your 110% honest effort during class, the more energized you will feel throughout the class and throughout the rest of your day.

### Preparation For Your First Class

- Since most studios are heated to 105 ° you need to have a large towel, a washcloth (sometimes two), a yoga mat, and a water bottle for class.
- Most studios sell mats and water. Some studios rent mats and towels. Call the studio you plan to attend to find out if mats and towels are available.
- Dress as light as possible. Men wear shorts or bathing suit. Women wear exercise top and shorts or a swimsuit. T-shirts are bulky; tank tops are better.
- Come on an empty stomach. No food 1 to 3 hours before class. A small quantity of simple, easily digestible food is recommended for the meal prior to class.
- Drink lots of water for several days before your first class if you're not in the habit of drinking water. Doctors estimate you need at least 2 liters per day for normal body maintenance. Double that for doing Bikram yoga. If you drink large quantities of caffeine drinks or eat mostly processed foods it can effect your body's ability to tolerate the heat, so please cut down on these items in preparation for class.

### What To Expect After Your First Class

- You might feel very tired after class. This is absolutely normal and a good sign that your body is cleansing. Your energy levels should be restored to normal within several classes.
- You might find yourself feeling extremely energetic and experience difficulty sleeping. Don't worry--this is a good sign that the yoga is truly filling you up with energy. You don't have insomnia. You just have more time to do the things you enjoy.
- You might feel sore or stiff the day after your first class. Come back to class as soon as possible! Your body is waking up and coming alive and you want to keep the process going!
- You might feel nauseous, dizzy or have a headache after class. This could be a sign that you are dehydrated. Please drink lots of water before returning to class. Or it could be a sign that you were trying so hard that you weren't breathing normally. Please breathe normally during every posture.
- You might experience some skin irritation. This too is normal, it means that the skin is releasing toxins. Showering directly after class will wash the toxins away. It will also help normalize the body temperature.
- You might feel very hungry after class for a while, or you might lose your appetite completely. Both reactions are normal. If you are concerned about your weight, don't worry too much either way. Once you get into a regular practice pattern, your appetite and your weight will normalize. You'll find yourself feeling and looking leaner and younger.

# FAQs for PRACTICING YOGIS & YOGINIS

## **Q. How many times a week is it recommended to practice?**

**A.** In the beginning, do the Full Class religiously each day for two months until you are performing all but the very difficult poses such as the Standing Bow Pulling and Stretching Pose eighty percent correctly. If you are restricted by any medical condition or have any chronic disease, you should continue daily until your condition is resolved.

Even when your progress is measured in fractions of inches that add excellence to what is already good, rather than in bold strokes, like being able to balance on one leg for ten seconds, you should continue your Yoga practice daily.

When you are performing ninety percent of the postures ninety percent correctly, you should still not feel complacent about doing your Yoga. Doing this Hatha Yoga class every day is like everything else you do in your life that is good for maintaining life. You don't plan to give up doing those things because of the daily benefit you receive.

Practice while following Bikarm's Beginning Yoga Class CD or cassette tape is an ideal method to practice the postures, as best as possible without being in an actual Bikram Yoga class.

Some tips: Set aside a special time of the day to create a regular daily practice. Set aside a regular practice area in your home, and if possible, equip it with a mirror and an extra heater or two. Wear clothing that does not restrict your movement. Do not eat within 2-3 hours of practice.

How good is this Yoga habit? Look at someone who has been doing this yoga for over twenty or thirty years. Don't ask their ages. They have become timeless.

## Q. Can you please explain 80-20 breathing and exhalation breathing?

**A.** 80-20: In this method of breathing, you take in a full breath. Go to the posture and continuously let out 20 percent of the air through your nose with your mouth closed. In postures that require 80-20 breathing, you need oxygen in the lungs to do the posture, so you will be able to maintain proper strength while performing the posture.

Exhalation: In exhalation breathing, you take in a full breath and exhale the breath completely when you achieve the posture. While you are doing the posture you should continue exhaling.

With either breathing technique, you should not strain. In the beginning, your lung capacity will not be large enough for you to sustain yourself with the above breathing methods. To prevent straining your lungs, take another breath as needed and continue with the breathing method. As your lung capacity improves and you improve doing your Yoga postures, you will find that following these breathing methods becomes as natural as doing the Yoga postures themselves.

### Q. Why are inversions not included in Bikram's series?

**A.** Bikram feels it is more important to do the postures outlined in his method first because it safely builds all the strength the body needs to be totally healthy--throughout all the systems. Most beginners do not have the strength to do traditional inverted postures safely.

Some of the benefits of inversions (blood flow to the brain, reduction of blood pressure, compression of the thyroid gland) are provided by separate leg stretching, separate leg forehead to knee, rabbit pose, and the whole series in general.

After several years of steady dedicated practice, your Bikram instructor may invite you to an advanced class in which inverted postures and more are practiced.

## FAQ's FOR ATHLETES AND WEIGHT LOSS

Q. Is Bikram Yoga aerobic?

A. The word aerobic literally means "with oxygen" or "in the presence of oxygen, involving or improving oxygen consumption by the body ." Aerobic activity trains the heart, lungs and cardiovascular system to process and deliver oxygen more quickly and efficiently to every part of the body by elevating the heart rate during exercise to its target level. As the heart muscle becomes stronger and more efficient, a larger amount of blood can be pumped with each stroke. Fewer strokes are then required to rapidly transport oxygen to all parts of the body.

You can derive these benefits from practicing Bikram yoga. Use this formula to find your target heart rate.

220 minus your age times 60% and times 90%

For example, a 30-year old would calculate his target zone using the above formula:  $220-30=190$ .  $190 \times .60=114$  and  $190 \times .90=171$ .

This individual would try to keep his heartrate between 114 (low end) and 171 (high end) beats per minute.

You can take your pulse during class and see that due to the nature of the asanas, your heart rate and respiration become elevated to your target level. This can help you determine how intensely to work during class.

Q. Can I still lift weights (running, biking, doing aerobics) once I start Bikram Yoga practice?

A. Bikram Yoga indeed does promote stretching and elasticity of muscles. It does so much more, though. It also promotes strength and balance, balanced strength, and balanced flexibility.

## FAQ'S: FOR ATHLETES & WEIGHT LOSS- continued

If you find in your practice for example, that your abdominals need strengthening or your hips or shoulders need stabilizing, you could do weight training that accomplishes those goals. The more your hips and shoulders are stabilized by balanced strength around the joints, the more in alignment your postures and your body will be.

It is also possible to only do Bikram Yoga and accomplish these goals, as the practice itself deepens your awareness of your body's needs.

### **Q. I've been experiencing tremendous pain in my hamstrings since I've started Bikram Yoga. What should I do?**

A. Bikram says, "It's not what you do, but how you do." So don't let the mind wander during practice. Don't be too aggressive or impatient, either. The only time you will hurt yourself (create a sprain or pull) is if you overuse your strength or do postures mindlessly. Think of alignment. Bio-mechanically you are very safe if you do postures in alignment.

Muscle imbalance creates a lot of problems. Check to make sure there is good alignment with the left and right side of the quads. Balance with the foot in alignment and the weight in alignment. Remember, the body follows the eyes. Be careful to do the postures correctly, because you are creating an imprint that is hard to undo.

Breath is the only way to affect the involuntary systems. Oxygen deprivation is a major cause of spasms, other muscle pains, and sciatica. Use breath to break through fear of pain-- sigh a relaxed sigh. Deep diaphragmatic breathing is best when dealing with lots of resistance. Send the breath there--breathe through the nose.

And finally, honor your boundaries, but expect them to expand. Have faith!

### **Q. With a proper diet is Bikram Yoga good for weight loss?**

A. A minimum of 10 classes per month is recommended to get the benefits of Bikram Yoga, among which is weight normalization. As a beginner, It takes three classes for your body to understand the proper approach to the posture, and ten classes for your body to begin to work with postures. You will realize optimization of all your body systems.

Digestion and respiration, as well as endocrine, lymphatic and elimination systems will begin to work harmoniously. Your appetite will normalize, and your unhealthy cravings will diminish. All of these results will help to normalize your weight if you devote yourself to regular practice, at least, but preferably more than 3 times per week.

# FAQ's FOR WOMEN (YOGINIS)

## **Bikram Yoga and Menstruation**

It is perfectly safe to do Bikram's yoga when menstruating. Inverted postures are normally the postures contraindicated for menstruation. But there are no inverted postures in Bikram's yoga.

So in fact, Bikram's yoga is very good for toning the reproductive system as it directly affects the reproductive organs and the endocrine glands--pituitary, pineal and thyroid gland in particular. The women's cycle becomes regular; complaints of irregularity and PMS decrease.

## **Bikram Yoga and Pregnancy**

### **Recommendations**

"If you have been doing yoga regularly just prior to your pregnancy, then you may continue with the yoga exercises in this book until your third month, or up until the time you are no longer able to lie on your abdomen. Then you should use Rajashree's Yoga for Pregnancy video.

If you are new to yoga or have not been doing Yoga just prior to your pregnancy, you should wait three months until you start. At that time you should use the Rajashree's pregnancy yoga video.

If your delivery was healthy and normal start your yoga the moment you are out of bed. Do all the exercises from the first day, no problem."

--Bikram Choudhury, Bikram's Beginning Yoga Class, ©2000

Pregnancy Continued...

### **Posture Concerns**

Postures that should not be practiced during pregnancy

- No postures should be done which cause compression on the diaphragm or heart.
- No head to knee pose, separate leg forehead to knee, or rabbit.
- No cobra, locust, full locust, bow.

### **Posture Modifications:**

- In backbends, don't push hips forward of knees
- In backbends, stretch upward and back with the upper spine; when coming up bend the knees to relieve back pressure.
- Moderate heat is okay from the beginning.
- Separate feet slightly in standing poses
  
- In forward bends keep knees open
- Rest on side in between postures rather than on the back.
- Long, deep, slow breathing in easy sitting position is relaxing for mom and baby.

### **About the Heat : Student Testimonials**

Student: "(Yes, I used a thermometer.) When acclimated to the heat and practicing regularly, my body temp most often stayed steady, sometimes went down and rarely went up. If I felt myself overheating, I would leave class and run cold water on the insides of my wrists and elbows to cool me down fast. I was always able to return to class quickly and finish class."

Student: " I am currently 29 weeks pregnant and from the day I found out I was pregnant I switched to the pregnancy poses. I have had absolutely no problems throughout my pregnancy and feel so wonderful after yoga (I average 4 times per week). I always stand in the back of the room and my instructors usually open a window for me at "party time" and keep it open until we start the floor posture series which seems to work really well for me. "

A teacher's perspective: " I usually suggest that my pregnant ladies first talk to their doctor and confirm that the doctor's actual concern with the heat is the risk of elevating the mom's internal body temperature. (Most doctors assume that if the room is hot, mom's temp will go up too.) If the concern is with mom's temperature, then I suggest that they bring a thermometer to class and monitor their temp throughout to gain a level of comfort. Strenuous yoga is not ideal for some (high-risk) pregnancies, and to be perfectly honest, isn't worth the risk."

Pregnancy Continued...

### **Benefits**

"From the day I found out I was pregnant I switched to the pregnancy poses. I have had absolutely no problems throughout my pregnancy and feel so wonderful after yoga (I average 4 times per week). ... I have felt convinced that one of the reasons I am having such a joyous and healthy pregnancy is because of my commitment to Rajashree's pregnancy yoga. In fact I have given testimony to this to everyone who comments on how healthy I look and my happy demeanor. . . I just couldn't imagine how all the positive feelings and visible results in me could possibly be harmful for the baby which I already love so much." --Julie Marlowe

"...When I was pushing, the L&D nurse was astounded by my ability to push so strongly and effectively, and my strength and stamina..."

"I...have no concerns about losing my pregnancy weight and regaining my pre pregnancy body once I am practicing again."  
--Kate Ulrich

Practicing yoga during pregnancy is one of the healthiest ways to nurture yourself and your baby. You will learn to become more patient and gentle with yourself and gain confidence in the beautiful mother that you are becoming. Marvel at the miracle of your baby and what your incredible body and spirit are capable of creating.

During your pregnancy, you and your baby are changing and growing every day. More than ever before, your yoga practice will change and grow from day to day. You will be faced with new challenges physically, emotionally, and spiritually. For example, physical balance may become more difficult but your flexibility will increase. Regarding the heat be cautious, but not afraid. It is still healthy for your body to sweat allowing your muscles to loosen and relax. The heat also helps toxins in the body to be released. Ask the teacher where the coolest part of the room is, and don't be afraid to sit out any poses your body (or your baby) tells you to.

**Yoga means union. May yoga unite you with yourself, your breath, your body and the new life you are creating.**

# FAQ'S FOR MEDICAL CONDITIONS & CONCERNS

## Q. With High Blood Pressure?

**A.** Unstable high blood pressure responds so quickly to diligent Yoga practice that doctors sometimes doubt their instruments. (This quick response of the blood pressure is one of the most telling demonstrations of Yoga's ability to regulate and synchronize body systems.) If you are tested about a week after starting Yoga, you may see a slight rise in pressure. Don't be alarmed. By the second week, that pressure will be normal or close to normal and will stay there as long as you maintain your yoga regimen.

Consult your doctor, use common sense, and don't push hard in any of the poses the first three days. The poses in which high blood pressure patients must continue to exercise caution until their blood pressure checks out normally are these: the backward bending portion of Half Moon, the Standing Bow Pulling, Balancing Stick, Cobra, the third part of Locust, Full Locust and the Camel.

Depending on the severity of your condition, the above should be done for a count of no more than five at first, building to ten counts only after two weeks. If you are supple enough to do the Fixed Firm fully the first few days, limit that to five counts as well. Be absolutely sure to rest between each set. It is also essential for heart patients to breathe normally during the postures. As for the Bow Pose, (on the floor) a beginner with high blood pressure must never perform the pose without a qualified teacher present.

It is because these backward bending positions create pressure in the chest, and so on the heart, that high blood pressure patients must use caution. Do not eliminate them though--with the exception of Bow Pose. They are the very friends you need to control your ailment.

### **Q. With Asthma, Emphysema, Chronic Bronchitis?**

**A.** Without knowing the cause of your asthma, we can tell you that Bikram Yoga will be good for you in several ways. It is done in a warm room which promotes relaxation of the muscles and nerves, and is the type of exercise that you can do with as little or as much intensity as appropriate for your needs.

In other words, you can do each posture with less effort if you're concerned about overexertion triggering an attack, or you can sit down and rest whenever you need to during the class.

It will relax your mind and help let go of tensions, toxins and negativity. It also strengthens your heart and lungs, improving your lung function. You will breathe easier and deeper than you ever have before.

### **Q. With Arthritis?**

**A.** Hopeless-type maladies? Yoga can help arthritis conditions. That is, it can relieve symptoms. This is not a miracle; it is common sense.

Many people think arthritis occurs because of an overabundance of calcium in the body. But there is really no overabundance. The problem is that the calcium is deposited as a form of calcium phosphate in the joint-tissue, including the spine. At that point, the calcium phosphate deposit begins to build layers in the joint--spiky crystal formations like a cactus--until no room is left for the joint to pivot smoothly in its socket. And these spiny needles irritate the surrounding muscles and nerves, and the agony of arthritis begins.

Rheumatism? It is closely related to arthritis. You have only to do your Yoga and you may be free of rheumatism.

Gout is also a problem that attacks the joints. And again and again in my series of exercises, you find me addressing myself specifically to exercising the joints. If I seem to be reducing some of the oldest, most painful, and perplexing diseases to lack of exercise, you're right. But that is what they often seem to boil down to.

Sadly, the theory seems to be that with advancing "age" one should "slow down," "take it easy," don't exert oneself or do too much exercise. And if you get something like arthritis, take it even easier, don't move, except to open your mouth to swallow the latest pill being offered as a cure. This advice is simply more nails for an earlier coffin.

Exercise, meaning daily Yoga practice, maybe the answer you are seeking for your condition.

### Q With Back Problems?

**A.** Picture your spine as a series of ball bearings (vertebrae) one on top of the other, each separated from the next by a cushion (a cartilage disc). When the spine is shiny and new, all the ball bearings are smooth and round, moving freely in all directions, and the cushions are strong and thick. Now picture your daily activities. In one position after another, probably ninety-five percent of the time, that spine is leaning forward.

What is happening, then, is that each vertebra of your back is compressing its cushion in a front wise direction. This goes on year after year until there is no resiliency left in the front of the cushions, while the two sides and back have grown weak and slack from disuse. In addition, lack of movement has made the bearings rusty and barnacles have developed. The result: backache, stiff neck, headache, and countless other complaints.

The cure: exercise! Make the spine work so that resiliency and strength are restored to each cushion, so that the rust and barnacles are worn off the ball bearings, so that an X ray would show them smooth and round, sitting snugly on their fat, renewed cushions.

Beginning with Half Moon, my series of exercises is designed to make your shocked and shriveled spine work to both sides, to the back, and then to the front. Only by exercising in all directions can your spine be healthy; and only with a healthy spine can you have a healthy nervous system.

If your chronic problem is something such as sciatic pain, lumbago, sore back muscles, whiplash, vertebrae out of line, shoulder trouble, radiating pains down the arms, tension headaches, swayback, spinal curvature, pinched nerves, or "something not quite right that the doctor said I ought to watch," stop watching. Act! Get to work on these exercises. Even those who have had spinal surgery should get to work--with their doctor's okay and a qualified teacher who can lead them in my particular series of exercises.

People with slipped disc are often in such pain that Yoga seems further torture. However, in numerous slipped disc cases, determined Yoga can save the day. So endure the pain. But please note that those with slipped disc should also work under the supervision of a qualified instructor using my exact series of exercises and the safety rules laid down in the body of this book.

As you can see, the best thing is to adopt a Yoga regimen before any of these troubles develop--for if you do, they probably won't develop.

**Q. I have kidney failure due to adult onset polycystic disease and am on dialysis three times a week. How does Bikram Yoga practice help?**

A. Bikram recommends performing the whole series religiously, working extra hard and long on those poses listed below as being excellent for kidney function and abdominal organs. Your body can and will right itself.

- Half moon
- Eagle
- Standing Bow and Bow
- Standing separate leg stretching, and standing separate leg stretching forehead to knee
- Triangle
- Wind Removing Pose
- Half Tortoise
- Camel
- Rabbit
- Seated Head to Knee with Stretching Pose
- Spinal Twist

**Q. My back hurts after I practice Bikram Yoga. Do you have any suggestions?**

A. Please follow the instructions carefully when you are doing forward bends. For example, in the half moon--padahasthasana series, the instructions are to bring your torso on your thighs, chest to the knees, no light space anywhere between the torso and the thighs. If you try to straighten your legs without having this first part accomplished, you can create pain in your lower back. Also keep in mind the instruction "360 degrees stretching." What that means is to make the stretch even throughout the whole back side of the body. (See previous question for more details).

You also want to follow these guidelines in separate leg stretching. Bikram says, "Suck in your stomach and bend your upper body down from your lower spine towards the floor." It is difficult to suck in your stomach unless you exhale, so make sure to exhale as you fold forward. When you suck in your stomach, it supports the whole pelvis to roll forwards with the rest of your spine--this eliminates strain in the lower back.

Working carefully, mindfully, allowing your breath to flow with your movement will help you to gradually deepen your experience of the postures.

### **Q. I have degenerative disc disease (or bulging or herniated discs). Can I still do forward bends?**

**A.** Generally, doctors recommend not doing forward bends with such conditions. With degenerative disc disease, improper forward bends can cause slippage of the vertebrae. With herniated or bulging discs, in forward bends, the bulge can press onto the spinal nerves creating pain.

Backward bends are recommended for building strength in the spine and spinal muscles, and they have the added advantage of taking the bulge away from the spinal nerves, relieving pain as well as toning the digestive system and strengthening the breathing.

However, it is important to learn to bend forward properly. At the beginning, learn to fold forward safely. Experiment gradually increasing the strength of your pulling on your heels in forward bends. Do not cause pain with this pulling--you must back away from pain. Also, don't do sit ups while in the acute stage of your condition--roll over onto your side to sit up.

Your practice of what you can do will gradually enable you to do more and more of the series as your back strengthens. You will get relief from pain and it is not impossible to regenerate the herniated or bulging discs. Expect to practice regularly for the best results.

### **Q. I have been diagnosed with plantar fasciitis. My doctor tells me to wear arch supports. Can I wear them when I do Bikram Yoga?**

**A.** It sounds like you're in pain and concerned about doing the right thing for yourself. Without knowing the details of your condition you should know that we've had students diagnosed with plantar fascias who have gotten relief and healing by practicing Bikram Yoga -- Without shoes; Without supportive arches; All the postures.

However, if your plantar fascia is actually torn, you may need to take the doctor's advice and hold off on some of the postures till at least the ligament knits back together. Of course if there's a bone spur involved, you will definitely want arch support to prevent the nerve pressing on it.

Generally we recommend If it is difficult to do a posture completely, do it partially providing that it does not cause injury. You can usually tell if it is simply the pain of stretching (which is a good pain) or the pain of injury (which is to be avoided). It will be the increased circulation from Bikram yoga practice that will help improve the condition, possibly even washing out the calcification if there is any, but for sure helping to strengthen the ligaments, tendons, bones, and muscles of the feet.

As always, it is your body, so therefore it is your decision whether to wear support or not; whether to do all the postures or not. But certainly attending class and gradually doing more will be to your advantage.

## Q. I have bad knees. I experience knee pain. Can Bikram Yoga help me?

**A.** Whether the knees are arthritic or injured, Bikram Yoga will definitely help. Bikram actually healed his knee, which was crushed by a 300 pound weight, with his guru's help doing yoga. You must move the knees to get circulation to them, and Bikram's Yoga helps you do both.

So how should you proceed? Make sure to listen carefully to the alignment instructions in each posture. When you are told to keep your feet parallel in standing postures, please do so. A half inch in either direction away from parallel has its effects all the way up the knees and into the hips.

In standing balancing postures, it is also important to keep the standing foot straight and the standing knee pointing straight ahead. If your knee bows back (hyperextension) you should bring the weight forwards towards the toes so as to engage the quadriceps muscle ("lock the knee") and lift the kneecap upwards. This action brings the leg into one line and brings true strength to the knees.

When you are bending your knees in any of the standing postures, keep the knees pointed over the toes. This will ensure that the knees and hips are strengthened evenly inside and out.

In triangle, when you are told to push your hips forward as you bend your front knee, this will keep your hip in line with your knee in line with your foot. This is also good for even strengthening of hip and knee joints.

In some of the standing postures, it might be very difficult to bend your knee to a 90 degree angle. So do the best you can without creating pain. Better to keep proper alignment bending 1% than to go 100% in poor alignment.

In the floor poses, notably fixed firm, half tortoise and perhaps rabbit, it might be difficult for you to bend your knees enough that the hips sit on the heels. To test your knee flexibility, keep lots of weight in your hands and bend the knees gradually to the point (but not past) of pain. You must be able to relax and breathe in the posture, holding it steady, for anything to happen. As the pain decreases and you start feeling more comfortable, you can gradually take the weight out of your hands and allow more pressure on the knees. Eventually you'll be able to go all the way into the posture, and you won't even remember the time when you couldn't even sit down!

You'll find that little by little your knee pain goes away and soon you'll realize that you can walk, climb up and go down stairs, even run a little without pain!

# THE PRACTICE OF YOGA: POST OPERATIVE TOTAL HIP REPLACEMENT SURGERY

Morton D. Hurt

## **introduction**

When I prepared the following instructions to perform Yoga, I first of all addressed the various poses as I modified for the right hip total hip replacement surgery I had on March 28, 2000. You'll notice in most cases I only address that part of a pose I had to modify for my surgery. Any pose or part of a pose not mentioned means I was able to perform, perhaps not to the same level prior to my surgery but at least to a level that in my opinion merits no comment. Except where I have specifically commented there is no change to any of the steps in a pose detailed in the instructions I received at Bikram's College of Yoga in Seattle, Washington.

## **Common Thread**

If there is a thread that runs through all the modified poses is the sense of moving into a pose until "resistance" is felt. It is at this point I feel someone recovering from total hip replacement hip surgery can gain the greatest benefit in his or her recovery process. This is not a point to simply "hang out" it is a point where through proper breathing techniques one is able to move deeper into a pose to eventually reach the same level of the pose that one might have enjoyed prior to surgery.

## **History**

As I previously mentioned I practiced my Yoga from December 12, 1999 (when it was confirmed I had lost some 75% + of the cartilage in my right hip) through March 27, 2000 (the night before my surgery). I credit the continuation of Yoga as a significant factor in the success of the surgery and the speed of my recovery. I was back to work in 6 weeks, walking without the aid of either crutches or a cane at 7 weeks and back to Yoga in 8 weeks post op.

For the most part I have not attempted to include any caveats as part of these instructions. Anyone who has had total hip replacement surgery should have been fully instructed as to what physical movements can or cannot be performed.

## THE PRACTICE OF YOGA POST OPERATIVE TOTAL HIP REPLACEMENT SURGERY- continued

The ability of one to return to the practice of Yoga will be affected by a number of factors not to mention at least their level of fitness and level of skill prior to the operation. I was 54 when I had my operation and would say I was in very good shape and was proficient in most of the various poses having practiced for some 3 1/2 years. In the final analysis I knew the "risks" when I returned to the practice of Yoga. What I also knew and firmly believe is that no matter how one modifies the various poses there is benefit in the pose. You simply have to allow your body to be the messenger and use some common sense. If one first thinks through the movements involved with each pose it's rather simple to determine where one has to be especially careful.

Lastly and most importantly anyone should be told there is life after a total hip replacement surgery. The Chinese say , "a journey of 1000 miles begins with the first step". So to with the practice of Yoga.

## POSTURE MODIFICATIONS

### **Ardha-Chandrasana with Pada-Hastasana**

Bend slowly to the right move your left hip to the to the left until you feel resistance. Similarly on the opposite side bend slowly to the left and move your right hip to the right until you feel resistance. Slowly bend arms and body backwards until you feel resistance. In Pada-Hastasana bend forward slowly from the hip joints until you feel resistance. My first objective in Pada-Hastasana was simply to place my hands on the shins of my legs.

### **Utkatasana**

1. Sit down only as far as one feels resistance. In the beginning I never went further than 45 degrees.
2. In the second part of awkward I simply tried to move as high up on my toes as possible. No attempt was made to sit down.
3. In the third part of awkward I would repeat the first part of the pose. Putting the knees together for at least the first 12 weeks post op should be avoided. Your orthopedic surgeon should have made this point many times.

### **Garursana**

In the Eagle Pose bending the knees about 6 inches is OK. I would transfer my weight to my left foot and slowly lift my right leg as high as comfortable bringing it as high as possible over the left thigh. I would not attempt to wrap the calf and foot totally around like a rope. I would merely hold the calf and foot just to the left side of the left leg with the top of right foot facing the mirrors. I would not attempt to sink down.

## THE PRACTICE OF YOGA POST OPERATIVE TOTAL HIP REPLACEMENT SURGERY- continued

### **Dandayamana-Janushirasana**

I would interlace my fingers firmly just below my right knee. I would then pull my right knee toward my chest until I met resistance.

### **Dandayamana-Dhanurasa**

Standing on my right leg in Standing Bow Pulling Pose I only kicked until I met resistance in my right hip. As with all the poses what the student will find is that it is the muscles of the operative hip that will restrict the depth that one is able to achieve in the pose.

### **Tuladandasana**

One of the most challenging of the poses. In the beginning all I would do is to step forward with my right foot in a modified salutation to the sun.

### **Dandayamana-Bibhaktapada-Paschimotthanasana**

I would bend forward from the lower back until I met resistance. In the beginning I would grasp just behind my legs. Keeping the back straight and the eyes up is very beneficial in this modified pose.

### **Trikanasa**

Keeping my left knee locked I would turn my right foot and leg to the right until I met resistance. I would bend my right knee to the right again until I met resistance. I would then go down slowly until I met resistance in my right thigh.

I would not attempt to move my right thigh parallel to the ground. Keeping my arms straight I would bend my torso directly to the right and would go no further into the pose than having my hand approximately 8 to 10 inches above my big toe.

### **Dandayamana-Bibhaktapada-Janusirasana**

Bending my right knee as much as necessary was essential for me to progress in the Standing Separate Leg Hand to Knee Pose. It was also helpful for my balance to keep my hands facing each other but apart rather than together. I would then bend forward until I met resistance.

### **Tadasana**

Standing on my left foot I would merely raise my right foot as high as possible on the inner thigh on my left leg with my goal being to have my right thigh parallel to the ground.

### **Padangustana**

Did not do prior to my operation.

### **Pavanamuktasana**

I would merely pull my right knee down toward my chest until I met resistance. Similarly I would make the same motion when performing Wind Removing Pose with both legs.

## THE PRACTICE OF YOGA POST OPERATIVE TOTAL HIP REPLACEMENT SURGERY- continued

### **Salabhasana**

I would lift my right leg until I met resistance. When raising both legs I would likewise go until I met resistance.

### **Poorna-Salabhasana and Dhanursana**

Both the Full Locust and the Bow Pulling Poses can be performed. Just merely go until resistance is felt.

### **Supta-Vajrasana**

In the beginning I would merely sit Japanese style with the aid of a small wooden bench, holding my hands in prayer and simply use this moment to meditate.

### **Ardha-Kurmasana**

I would use the small wooden bench as an aid in performing the Half Tortoise Pose.

### **Ustrasana**

In the beginning I would do no more than stand up on my knees and bend back slowly until I met resistance.

### **Sasangasana**

Once again I would use the small bench as an aid in performing the Rabbit Pose bending forward until I met resistance.

### **Janushirasana with Paschimotthanasana**

I would bend my extended leg until I could grasp my toes and bring my forehead in contact with my knee then slowly push down with my forehead until resistance was felt.

In the Stretching Pose I would grasp my ankles slowly bending forward at the waste until resistance was met.

### **Ardha-Matsyendrasana**

Again this is one of those poses where crossing my right leg over my left knee had to be avoided for at least the first 12 weeks post op. So to modify this pose I would simply bend my right knee keeping my right foot flat on the floor and position it on the right side of my left knee rather than the left side. Rather than bringing my left arm to the right and over my right knee I would simply keep it on the left side with palm down on the carpet. I would then twist my body to the right until resistance was met.

### **Kapalbhati in Vajrasana**

With the aid of the small wooden bench the Blowing in Firm Pose can easily be performed.

## **FOLLOW-UP THE PRACTICE OF YOGA 20 MONTHS POST OPERATIVE - TOTAL HIP REPLACEMENT SURGERY**

by Morton D. Hurt November 16, 2001

It's been some 15 months since I wrote my article of August 10, 2000 entitled The Practice of Yoga Post Operative Total Hip Replacement Surgery. In September of this year I had my one year post operative physical. My orthopedic surgeon indicated everything looked great. I continue with my practice at least two times per week at Bikram's Yoga College of India located in the Fremont district of Seattle, Washington. I am very pleased to say that I am now able to perform all the poses for the most part without modification. I still adhere to listening to my body and moving into a pose until "resistance" is met, except now with the strength I've gained over the past 20 months I am even more willing to move deeper into each pose. For any one who read the article I just want them to know I am still practicing and that there truly is life after a total hip replacement surgery.

FOLLOW-UP: Feb 13, 2002

Will be 2 years post op end of March. Am still practicing 2-3 times per week and feel great.

Namaste  
Mort Hurt

## FAQS PRACTICING BIKRAM YOGA OUTSIDE THE STUDIO

**Q. If I can't get to a studio to practice in class, will I get any benefit from practicing at home in a normally heated room?**

**A.** You must heat the area where you do your yoga. If you can, you should try to heat it to at least 100 degrees F. You should sweat a lot when you do your hatha yoga. If your bathroom is large enough, you can preheat the room with a space heater, and by running the shower with hot water, leave the water in the tub as this will keep the room hot. If you have difficulty heating an area to 100 degrees, then you must wear warm up clothing while you do your yoga. This will keep the heat from escaping the body.

I cannot overstate the importance of doing your hatha yoga in heat. Doing your yoga in a cold environment can bring harm to your body. Remember you are changing the construction of your body as you perform these postures. Suppose you are going to make a sword. You start with a piece of fine steel and the first thing you do is put the steel in the fire and heat it up. When the steel is hot it becomes soft. Then you can hammer it and slowly you make it change shape to the sword you want. This is the natural way. Now if you don't heat it up and start hammering the cold steel nothing is going to happen to the steel but you'll break your hand, the hammer, your arm and all the connecting joints. The same thing happens when you do any exercise, even hatha yoga, in a cold environment. When you do your hatha yoga in the heat, your body is malleable.

If this is completely impossible to arrange, then move more slowly and carefully, and breathe more deeply into the postures.

**Q. There is not a Bikram Yoga studio in my area. What is the best way to learn the postures at home?**

**A.** It is recommended one should have a copy of Bikram's book on hand, and begin by reading the book all the way through to get a clear idea of the postures, their benefits, and the proper approach to each posture.

Then begin by teaching yourself one new posture at a time, starting with the first posture, and adding the next one, and so on and so on. This will build your strength and help you to remember the postures in order.

Practice while following Bikram's Beginning Yoga Class CD or cassette tape is an ideal method to practice the postures, as best as possible without being in an actual Bikram Yoga class.

Some tips: Set aside a special time of the day to create a regular daily practice. Set aside a regular practice area in your home, and if possible, equip it with a mirror and an extra heater or two. Wear clothing that does not restrict your movement. Do not eat within 2-3 hours of practice.

If you get discouraged, be patient, keep trying with "bulldog determination" and don't give up! When you see yourself progressing, you will become encouraged, and want to continue practicing all the more.

# LOCATIONS

## Fountainview & South Blvd



**Galleria Area** 1854 Fountainview Dr.  
Houston, TX 77057 (713) 781-5333



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