

Cycles within Cycles



1 Janu Sirsasana. Square your hips to the front, and reach forward to grasp the right foot. Press the right leg fully straight, moving the back of the thigh into the floor. With each inhalation lift your torso up and away from your waist and pelvis.

2 Resting Pigeon. Swing the right leg around behind you, and again square the hips. As much as you can, bring the left shin parallel to the plane of the hips. Maintain a subtle lift in your torso so you don't collapse in the shoulders.



3 Pigeon Back Arch. Keeping your back leg strong and your hips squared, lift your pubic bone toward your navel, move your tailbone and sacrum forward and in, arch your back, and pull up the front of your torso. Move your shoulders back and down, and bring your shoulder blades into the body.



4 Pigeon Thigh Stretch. Bend your right leg so you can catch your foot with your hand. Here it's especially important to square your hips and avoid twisting the pelvis. Move delicately into this intense thigh stretch.

5 Over and Under Pose. Keeping your feet flexed so you don't roll on top of them, place your right foot atop your left knee. Don't worry if one or both knees are quite high; with time, the hips will release. As far as possible, bring both shins parallel to the plane of the hips.



6 Ardha Matsyendrasana. Ground through the sitting bones, right foot, and left leg, and elongate your core all the way through the crown of your head. Lengthen the spine with each inhalation, and deepen the twist with each exhalation.

Benefits

- ▶ Opens hips in all directions
- ▶ Prepares body for deeper forward folds, back bends, and twists
- ▶ Increases flexibility of legs, back, chest, and shoulders
- ▶ Stimulates circulation in spine, abdomen, and torso
- ▶ Improves digestion and elimination
- ▶ Prepares body for relaxation