

Twists

Twisting asanas are a group of yoga postures that involve turning the shoulders to face in the opposite direction from the hips. The hips usually remain stable and we 'twist' the upper portion of our bodies so that it faces one way, and then the other (apart from supine twists, where we keep the shoulders stable and move the hips).



Why should we twist?

Spine Flexibility

It's important to rotate the spine and stretch the muscles of the back regularly to ensure that the spine retains its natural range of motion as we get older. Without giving our back these exercises, we run the risk of the vertebrae of our spine fusing together and hardening.



Detoxification

Twisting asanas also aid detoxification. When we gently twist the spine we increase circulation and massage our internal organs, literally helping the body squeeze out it's waste products.

Neutralising

Yoga twists are a neutralising group of asanas, so they are great to do after forward bends or back bending poses to bring the spine back to neutral.

Aid breathing

Twists give us a wonderful energy boost and create space in the torso. While practicing yoga, we realise the importance of full and deep breathing for increasing our energy and bringing us a feeling of relaxation. While twisting, we loosen up the back, the ribs, the chest, the inter-coastal muscles that are in between the ribs and the fascia that joins every thing together. When this area is stretched and loosened we can breathe deeper, thus increasing our energy and our ability to relax.

How should we twist?

Lengthen first

When we twist, it is first important to lengthen the spine- to sit up as tall as you can to create space in between the vertebrae.

As time goes on, if we don't make the effort to maintain the space between the vertebrae, our vertebrae will slowly start to collapse into each other, causing back pain and a huge drop in energy levels. When we twist after creating that space, we stretch and strengthen the spine and improve our overall posture. Twists give us an instant energy lift and help to decompress the spine safely.

Twist from your lower back first

So we have already established that we want to lengthen the spine before we twist, and to get the most out of your posture it's important to twist from the lower spine first, rather than just turning at the shoulder/upper back area. Start gently moving from the lower back/waist area, and then the mid back, and then the upper back. Lastly turn the neck, if that feels comfortable for you.

Contraindications

It is advised not to twist, or take very gentle modified and supported twists, if you are pregnant, have chronic digestive issues or osteoporosis. Take advice before you practise.

They can help with back pain and stiffness, but if it is significant pain or injury in the back then take advice or do not twist or practise only very gentle twists.