

# STRETCH YOURSELF IN STRETCH POSE

One posture unique to Kundalini Yoga and used frequently is Stretch Pose. Although it can be challenging, when done correctly it has a tremendous effect on the entire body.

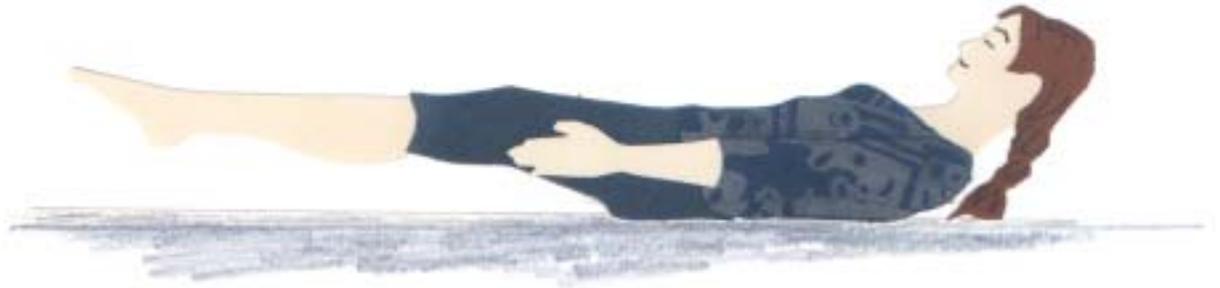


Illustration by  
Guru Nam Kaur  
Khalsa

**POSTURE:**  
Stretch Pose

**CHAKRA:**  
Third

**BENEFITS:**  
By working on the navel point, stretch pose resets the entire nervous system and strengthens the abdominal area. In conjunction with Breath of Fire, it purifies the blood, calms and rejuvenates. By working on the third chakra, it boosts resolve and self-esteem.

Simple instructions for this pose:

- Lie on your back.
- Bring your feet together, raise your head and heels 6 inches off the ground.
- Focus the eyes on the toes and stretch the toes so they point away from you.
- Place your arms either above your thighs with the palms facing down but not touching the legs, or alongside your legs with the palms facing your body but not touching.
- Begin Breath of Fire (See page 20).

In many sets, this posture is held for 1-3 minutes. Most people can muscle through the first 30 seconds or so, then the body may start to shake and the face may go into contortions, and then collapse. Beginners are not expected to hold up for the full time.

Here are some techniques to master the posture without too much effort. Understand that even though this posture takes some physical strength, it isn't physical strength that keeps you up. It's the navel center and the breath that gets you through. If you engage proper technique it takes less, not more, effort to go the distance.

## The Lower Back and Legs

To create better stability in the posture, press your lower back into the floor as you raise the legs and apply a slight root lock.<sup>1</sup> This action draws the navel center in and keeps the lower back in constant contact with the floor. It also

brings the focus of the exercise to the navel center and provides the necessary base for the posture. Keep your toes pointed and feel the stretch from the navel center all the way down to your feet.

## The Chest and Head

To raise your chest and head, first lengthen the back of your neck and bring the chest and head off the ground at the same time, then pull the chin in towards the throat in Neck Lock. This brings the heart center off the floor and creates a counter stretch from the navel center to the top of the head. If your head comes up too far, you put pressure on the heart and make it harder to keep your lower back on the floor. Mindfully lengthening your neck will help counter this tendency. Your upper body is stretching toward the top of your head and your lower body is stretching toward your feet. The navel center becomes the balance point or fulcrum of your body.

## The Breath

Your breath doesn't need to be overly rapid; it should remain at a steady pace throughout the exercise. You may have noticed that breathing faster doesn't make the time go by faster. Maintain a rate of 2 to 3 breaths per second and mentally chant the mantra *Sat Nam*.<sup>2</sup> If you can focus on the breath and the mantra, and relax the muscles that aren't needed, the time will fly by!

<sup>1</sup> See Glossary, pages 86-87.

<sup>2</sup> Rhymes with "But Mom"