

KUNDALINI YOGA FOR A HEALTHY BACK

Over the past four years, back pain in the U.S. has reached epidemic proportions. Why, after so many millions of years of evolution, has the back become so weak and susceptible to pain? Theories abound, but one of the primary contributors is that as a society we tend to live out of balance with ourselves and with our natural environments. Our back and pelvis physically and emotionally represent our support and foundation. When our foundation is weak and can be shaken, we become susceptible to injury and pain. When we can find and maintain our own center and balance, then we have the stability and foundation that will support us through life's trials and tribulations.

Pranayam: Breath Work

The power of the breath, when practiced correctly, activates the navel. The navel is not only the center of energy transformation in the body; navel and abdominal strength provide a firm support for the back muscles. When the navel is weak, the back has to work harder. In his new book, *Divine Alignment*, Guru Prem Singh gives an excellent program for proper breathing techniques and for using the power of the breath and the navel point for self-healing and self-regeneration. Since proper breathing continually adjusts the dia-phragm, pelvis, and lower vertebrae, it is especially effective for dealing with lower back pain.

When we breathe correctly, there is a wave-like oscillation from the breath that is reflected in the body. As we breathe and the body relaxes, this wave-like energy from the breath causes the bones, muscles, and skin to move in response. This helps the body to adjust and align itself with every breath. When we breathe correctly, we strengthen the navel point and abdominal muscles so the hips, lower back, and inner organs are fully supported. In this centering we are able to keep the position of the pelvis stable and maintain a healthy posture.

Pranayam that I recommend for developing the navel point, balancing the pelvis, relieving pain, and self-healing are Dog Breath (*Pawn Kanee Pranayam*) and the Breath of Ten Meditation. The regular practice of these two breaths helps us achieve greater structural alignment and balance which in turn allow us to be healthy and hopefully pain free.



By Sada Sat Singh Khalsa

Photography by Ron Hamad

Pawn Kanee Pranayam (Dog Breath)

It is said that this pranayam can correct our five tattwas (the elements of earth, water, fire, air, and ether), unlock the diaphragm, take away anger, and return us to the innocence of childhood. As you do the breath, imagine that your breath is creating the sound *Har*, the healing sound of the universe.

Sit in Easy Pose with your hands on your knees. Bring your chin in and your chest out and keep your chin level with the ground. Stick your tongue all the way out and down and keep it like this as you rapidly breathe in and out through your mouth. As you exhale, contract your navel point back and up towards your spine and as you inhale, relax the navel point forward. Keep the breath powerful and continue this panting breath for 3-5 minutes. When you feel a tingling in your toes, thighs, and lower back, it is an indication that you are doing it correctly.

To end, bring your tongue back in, inhale, hold your breath 15 seconds, pressing the tongue hard against the upper palate. After 15 seconds, exhale and repeat this ending sequence two more times and relax.

Yoga can be a very effective program for easing back pain.

Location for all yoga poses: Le Studio in Hollywood, California, USA
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