

***A routine to ease the symptoms associated with normal menstruation.**

This sequence is for use **between your periods**. It is a shortened version of the full sequence which you can find, along with many others, in 'Iyengar Yoga - The Path To Holistic Health'. See the Yoga Kit For Sale page on my web site for details of this book. In any case, this is a sequence for people attending a regular class, so you should be familiar with the poses. (N.B See the Routine **For Use During Menstruation** for advice on which poses to use and which to avoid during menstruation.)

This routine helps with the normal symptoms associated with menstruation - cramps, headache, nausea, frequent bowel movement are all normal. If you have a persistent or abnormal difficulty, do see your doctor. The routine helps to tone and strengthen your abdominal and pelvic region. It should take 20-30 minutes.

Prepare a comfortable space and ask not to be disturbed - soft light, a candle or incense, will help you to feel calm and relaxed. Put the short edge of your mat against a section of clear wall, and two blocks one on top of the other a couple of inches from the wall. You might also need more cushions and a large folded towel. During your practice, focus on extension, opening, softening and relaxing. If you find the pose uncomfortable, come out of it and try again, paying attention to the details, and not 'pushing' yourself. You want to work at your **optimum**, not at your maximum.

- **Baddakonasana.** Sit on a couple of blocks with your back to a wall. If you get low back pain, put a small cushion or a folded towel between the back of your waist and the wall. Bring the soles of your feet together and let your knees spread apart. Support your knees on two large cushions or yoga bricks. Allow your upper spine and chest to lift up and your lower spine to release down, creating space around your waist and abdomen. Put the heels of your hands or fingertips on the floor by the back of your hips for support. Slowly release the muscles down your inner thighs, from your groins to your knees. Stay, breathing quietly and naturally, for 2-4 minutes.
- **Upavista Konasana.** Gently straighten out your legs. Stretch them away from your body at a wide angle, keeping the centre of the back of each heel on the floor and your feet upright. Push your thighs firmly down to support the lift of your trunk. Put the heels of your hands or fingertips on the floor by your hips for extra support. Lift your chest and lengthen your upper spine up, creating space around your waist and abdomen. Stay, breathing quietly and naturally, for 1-2 minutes. Gently lift your knees and bring your legs together.
- **Supta baddakonasana.** Re-arrange your equipment so you have a folded blanket for your head, yoga bricks or cushions for your knees

and a strap for your feet. Sit in Baddakonasana as above. Slowly lie down, drawing your feet towards you, and arrange the support for your knees so that there is no strain on your inner thighs. Have the folded blanket under your head and neck. Stay, breathing quietly and naturally, for 2-4 minutes. Slowly lift your knees together and take your feet wide on the mat, with your knees still bent up, resting your inner legs. Then roll over onto your right hand side, and push yourself up to sitting. (Don't sit straight up - you'll undo all the good work you have just done!)

- **Tadasana and Urdhva Hastasana.** Stand with your feet together, your big toes and inner heels touching. (You can have your back to the wall for balance, heels slightly away from the wall so your legs are upright.) Lift and tighten your kneecaps. Press your thighs back and your tailbone forwards until you feel your top thighs and hips are very firm. Lift your chest – your head may go back slightly – and roll your shoulders back and down. Let the crown of your head lift towards the ceiling and your fingers stretch towards the sides of your knees, gently locking your elbows. Inhale and stretch your arms forwards and up, keeping them straight. If you find your shoulders are stiff, let your hands come apart in a 'v' shape, but aim to keep your arms straight. On the exhalation, bring your arms down to your sides. Breathe normally once or twice, then slowly repeat again.
- **Trikonasana.** Standing in the middle of your mat, take your feet very wide apart, feet parallel, hands on your hips. Turn your left toes in slightly and your right foot out. Lift and tighten your kneecaps. Inhale and stretch your arms out at shoulder height. Exhale and take your right hand to your right shin, left hand straight up, eyes looking forward. Stay for a couple of breaths, inhale to come up. Release your hands onto your hips and bring your feet back to parallel again. Repeat to the left hand side. (Check you are not holding your breath through this.) Repeat once more to either side, keeping your breath gentle and steady.
- **Prasarita padottanasana.** You can use a chair to help with this pose. Place it a good arm's length in front of you on the mat, seat towards you, with its front feet on the mat, so it won't slip about. It can also feel very pleasant if you rest your bottom on the wall, but again, keep heels slightly away so your legs are upright. Take your legs very wide, feet parallel and hands on your hips. As before, lift and tighten your kneecaps. Press your thighs back and your tailbone forwards until you feel your top thighs and hips are very firm. Lift your chest – your head may go back slightly – and roll your shoulders back and down. Let the crown of your head lift towards the ceiling. Without losing any of the strength in your legs, keep your back straight and hinge at the hips, taking your trunk towards the chair. Let your hands, then forearms, then elbows find the chair seat. Rest the top of your chest, your folded arms and

your head on the chair, keeping your legs stretching and lifting up strongly. Stay, breathing quietly and naturally, for 2-4 minutes.

- **Sarvangasana.** (If you are familiar with the pose and have your own blocks, you can do your pose using your chair for Halasana. Stay for four minutes breathing quietly.) This is an easy version of shoulder stand which you can do from your sofa. (If you are not familiar with shoulder stand, avoid this and do the pose below.) From the sofa – place a bolster or two blocks and a folded blanket on the floor by the sofa, where your feet would normally be. Sit on the sofa and swivel all the way round, so your legs are over the back of the sofa, your bottom on the seat towards the back for support. Gently lower yourself down until your shoulders are resting on the bolster or blocks and your lower back is resting on the seat, legs and feet stretched over the back of the sofa. It should feel very comfortable, with no strain in your head, ears or eyes. (Most people slip off during the first couple of attempts! Ask someone to help guide your shoulders to the bolster if this happens to you.) When you are comfortable, stay for four minutes, breathing quietly and normally. Slide off the sofa onto the floor and rest for a minute before rolling to one side to come up. Finish the routine with the pose below.
- **Alternative to Sarvangasana.** Lie on your mat with the chair sideways to your body. Lift your legs over the seat of the chair. Rest your calves on the seat, and your whole spine and head on the floor. Have your hands either side of your body, palms facing upwards and fingers relaxed. Put your eyebag over your eyes and rest for 3-5 minutes, keeping your jaw relaxed and your mind focused on your gentle, steady breathing. Roll onto one side and rest before you come up to sitting.

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