

back in action | Open up with a revitalizing sequence that strengthens the back body.



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the practice

Your core is more than just your front body. This energizing sequence strengthens the “back core,” warming you up with backbends on your belly, legs, hands, and feet before peaking with Urdhva Dhanurasana (Upward Bow Pose), a big and invigorating backbend.

mind-body benefits

Backbends counter the compression in the spine caused by chronic sitting. They also build a strong “back core,” which lets you stand up straighter with ease and encourages you to feel more open and expansive as you move through your day.

key focal points

As you come into your backbends, pull the shoulders down the back and draw your sternum forward to create an even arch. You want a feeling of traction in the spine, as though it’s drawing forward and away from the pelvis.

MAIN SEQUENCE

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Warm up with several rounds of Surya Namaskar A and B (Sun Salutations A and B). As you practice the following sequence, hold each pose for 5 breaths unless otherwise noted.



1 SPHINX POSE

Lie on your belly with forearms in front, palms down, elbows under shoulders. Pull the shoulders down the back as you reach the sternum forward. Press the pubic bone to the ground. To release, bring the hands by your sides and forehead to the mat.



**2 SALABHASANA A
LOCUST POSE A**

Keep your hands by your sides, palms up, legs and feet together. Pull your shoulders down your back. Inhale, and lift your chest forward and up as you raise your legs. Root your fingers and pelvis into the ground.



**3 SALABHASANA B
LOCUST POSE B**

Place your hands by the lower rib cage, palms down. Pull the shoulder blades down the back as you reach the sternum forward and up. To release, come down, forehead and arms resting on the floor.



**4 URDHVA MUKHA SVANASANA
UPWARD-FACING DOG POSE**

Place your hands by the lower rib cage. Inhale, straighten the arms, and press downward, pulling shoulder blades down the back and your spine and sternum forward and up. With toes pointed, thighs and knees lift.



**5 ADHO MUKHA SVANASANA
DOWNWARD-FACING DOG POSE**

Exhale, and lift back as the hips reach up to the sky and the arms press forward and into the floor. Have equal weight on your hands and feet. Use your arms to lengthen your spine as you straighten your legs.



6 PLANK POSE

Exhale, and shift your weight forward, shoulders over wrists, heels over toes. Engage the abdominals, and feel that your spine keeps its natural curve. Don't let the low back or head sink toward the floor. Keep your shoulder blades down the back.



**7 CHATURANGA DANDASANA
FOUR-LIMBED STAFF POSE**

Bend your elbows, hugging them near your sides, and draw your shoulders down your back. As you lower, try to keep your body parallel to the ground. Pause for one breath when the torso is at the height of your elbows, and then come down to the ground.



**8 DHANURASANA
BOW POSE**

Bend your knees and reach back to grab the outside of your ankles. Inhale, and lift your legs and chest off the ground. Press your shins into your hands and your pelvis into the ground while the chest reaches forward. Release the pose, and lie down on the mat.



**9 VAJRASANA
THUNDERBOLT POSE**

Come to hands and knees, and then sit back on your heels with toes pointed. Rest your hands on the tops of your legs, and take a moment to gather your energy for the next pose.



**10 USTRASANA
CAMEL POSE, VARIATION**

Inhale, lift up off your heels, and press your shins down as you lift the chest. Place your hands on your hips, and press shoulders and arms down as you lift the chest, bend backward, and move your hips forward.



**11 BALASANA
CHILD'S POSE**

Come out of Camel Pose, and sit back on your heels with your toes pointed. Fold over your thighs as you reach your arms in front. Rest your head on the floor.

FINISHING POSES



**12 SETU BANDHA SARVANGASANA
BRIDGE POSE**

Lie on your back. Bend your knees, feet directly under them. Inhale, and lift your pelvis. Interlace your fingers under your body, and straighten your arms toward the feet. To exit, release down to the floor.



**13 URDHVA DHANURASANA
UPWARD BOW POSE**

Place your hands on the mat next to your ears, fingers pointed at your feet. Inhale, and straighten your arms and legs as you lift your back off the ground. To exit, tuck your chin and lower down.



**14 JATHARA PARIVARTANASANA
REVOLVED ABDOMEN POSE, VARIATION**

With arms out to the sides at shoulder height, bend your knees with legs together. Lower the legs to the right. Keep your shoulder blades and back on the ground. Repeat on the left side before coming up to sit.



**15 PASCHIMOTTANASANA
SEATED FORWARD BEND**

Extend the legs in front, feet touching. Inhale, and grasp the outside of your feet, extending your spine. Exhale, and fold over your legs. Stay here for 1-2 minutes before releasing hands and sitting up.



**16 SIDDHASANA
ADEPT'S POSE, VARIATION**

Sit cross-legged, right leg in front, and inhale. As you exhale, hinge at your hips and fold your torso forward. Walk your hands forward, extending your spine over your legs. Sit up, switch legs, and repeat pose.



A video of this Home Practice sequence can be found online at yogajournal.com/livemag.

TO FINISH

Gently come up to sitting, and then lie down for Savasana (Corpse Pose).