

Poses for the Lower Back

These modified poses offer relief for the lower back by releasing tight hips, hamstrings, and spinal muscles and improving abdominal tone. This sequence can be practiced in 30 minutes or expanded for deeper study. Through focused attention on a particular area of the body, this sequence cultivates *dharana*, or concentration, the sixth limb of yoga.

Props and techniques:

- See *Yoga the Iyengar Way* by Silva, Mira, and Shyam Mehta for instruction on the poses.
- See *Yoga: The Path to Holistic Health* by B.K.S. Iyengar, Chapter 7 for images of prop setups.
- While menstruating or pregnant, modify this sequence by practicing the first four poses below followed by Bharadvajasana on chair and supta baddha konasana with support.
- Experienced students may work toward the classic poses and expand this sequence by adding: additional lateral standing poses after utthita parsvakonasana, additional standing forward bends after prasarita padottanasana, and inversions after jathara parivartanasana. Also see B.K.S. Iyengar's *Light on Yoga* Appendix 2, "Backache".

Sutra study: In *Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* by B.K.S. Iyengar, read sutras II. 29 and III. 1 and commentary. These sutras outline the eight limbs of yoga and elaborate on the sixth limb, *dharana* (concentration). While the eight limbs are frequently viewed as hierarchical, Mr. Iyengar discusses the importance of observing all eight limbs within the practice of physical postures (*asana*).

Uttanasana (feet hip distance apart, concave extension with palms to wall or hands on chair or blocks)

Utthita parsvakonasana (hand on chair or block)

Prasarita padottanasana (concave extension with hands on blocks or chair)

Adho mukha svanasana (classic pose or hands on chair seat or blocks)

Supta padangusthasana I (press foot of the down leg into wall and use strap for the lifted leg)

Urdhva prasarita padasana (legs at 90 degrees, with and then without support of strap)

Jathara parivartanasana (legs bent)

Kurmasana (modified on chair, see accompanying photo)

Savasana (lower legs on chair seat)