

STAY YOUNG *with* Yoga

*The easy way
to age well*

- * Feel more flexible
- * Stop weight gain
- * Look years younger
- * Boost your brain



52
*poses &
stretches*

STAY YOUNG *with* Yoga

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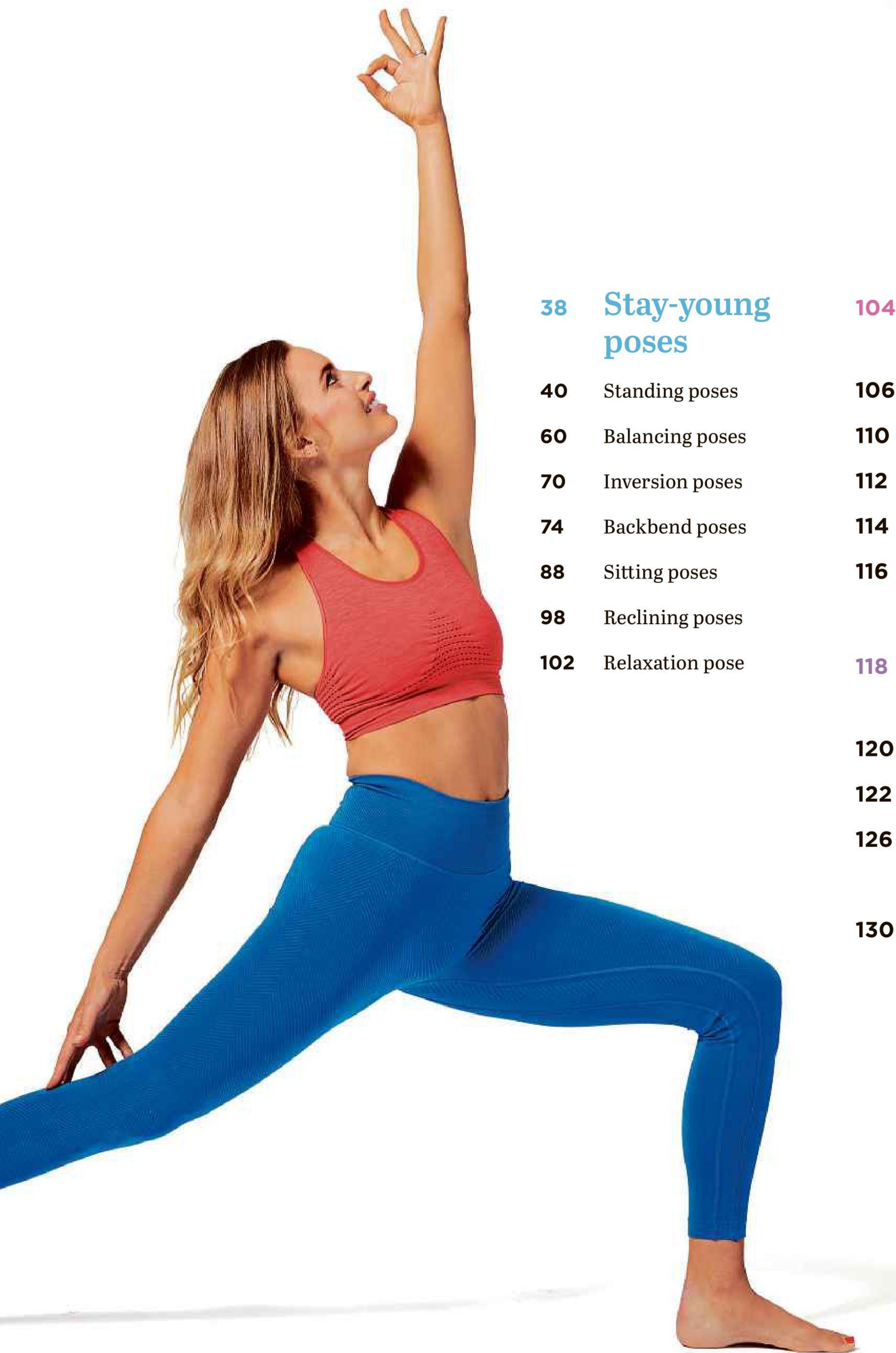
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Welcome

Does your body feel stiff and creaky when you wake up in the morning? Have you noticed frown lines on your face or weight gain around your middle? Or perhaps you forget where you left your keys or find it hard to sleep well at night.

The signs of ageing creep up on us all, meaning we sometimes don't feel as fit, focused and energetic as we'd like. Well, yoga can help. This ancient system of mind and body exercise is now medically proven to offer anti-ageing benefits. If yoga came as a pill, it's likely doctors would prescribe it to keep us fit, young and healthy!

The unique series of postures cleverly tunes all your body's systems, balancing hormones, cleansing toxins, protecting your heart and rejuvenating your mind, as well as strengthening and stretching every part of your body. By building a regular practice and including poses to target your goals – Tree (p44) to improve your balance or Camel (p82) to tighten your jawline, for instance – you can devise an effective, anti-ageing yoga programme.

Stay Young with Yoga is your perfect guide.

With expert advice and step-by-step

instruction, you'll discover the benefits, learn the foundations and then experience the

incredible rewards as you

practise the stay-young sequences, stretches and breathing exercises.

Here's to an ageless you!

How to use this book

Ready to begin your yoga journey to a fitter, flexible, younger you? Start here to reap the maximum rewards from this plan.

p10



Discover the benefits

From stronger bones and a leaner body to better balance and radiant skin, yoga is proven to offer stay-young benefits for body and mind. In this section, you'll find the scientific facts that show this ancient exercise system is the way to agelessness. Whether you want to look younger, stay supple or boost your brain power, discover why you should start yoga today.

p36



How to start

All you need to begin practising yoga is a mat and a willing mind. But having a few props and safety guidelines can help you get more from your practice and stay injury free. In this section, you'll find the kit and tips that will help you enjoy your sessions, plus advice for particular health concerns.

p38



Learn the poses

Now it's time to try the poses that form the foundations of yoga. Every posture offers specific benefits for body and mind, meaning you can tailor your sessions to your goals. Start by learning each of the poses, following the expert step-by-step instructions. Once you're familiar with the technique, you can handpick poses to target your needs.

p104



Start your sessions

Once you've learnt yoga's powerful poses, you can combine them into therapeutic sequences. These dynamic workouts are an enjoyable and effective focus for your practice. Want to boost your bones, lubricate your joints or energise your mind? In this section of the book, you'll find a collection of yoga sequences to match your goals.

p122



Restore and renew

It's not just yoga's poses that help you stay younger. Yoga breathing techniques, relaxation methods and meditation exercises are also proven to offer powerful anti-ageing benefits. By reducing the ageing effects of stress and fatigue, detoxifying your body and regenerating your body's cells, these powerful practices are key tools for daily life.

How yoga helps you age well

Want to look and feel younger for longer? Yoga offers a host of anti-ageing benefits – from better balance to a sharper mind. Here's the proof

Ever marvelled at an older yoga practitioner who has the flexibility, agility and strength of a 21-year-old? These dedicated yogis are living proof of the anti-ageing benefits of regular yoga practice – and the good news is that it's never too late to start reaping them. As we age, our bodies tend to become stiffer and weaker; our stamina and energy levels

flounder; we lose muscle mass and gain fat; and we may not feel as mentally sharp as we once did. However, none of this is inevitable – as that 80-something yogi can testify.

Use it or lose it

Many of the unwanted effects of ageing are simply down to inactivity. Yoga uses the body's entire range of movement to keep joints and

muscles strong and supple. As a low-impact form of exercise, it helps build and maintain fitness, stamina and energy levels safely and effectively. It also improves your balance, perfects your posture and prevents age-related wear and tear to your body. But yoga's stop-the-clock benefits don't end there. Because it combines fitness with meditative techniques such



Ask the expert

Michele Pernetta is founder of Fierce Grace Yoga and the SOB (Stiff, Old, Broken) yoga class (fiercegrace.com).

Q *Can yoga slow down ageing?*

‘What most of us think of as inevitable ageing isn’t, in fact, inevitable. Stooped posture, aching and inflexible joints, lack of energy, loss of balance and immobility are not natural at all – they are the effects of lack of movement, a sedentary lifestyle, lack of muscle mass and poor postural alignment among other things. Simply not stretching and not returning the body to its natural range of movement regularly can begin the process of degeneration of discs, cartilage, stiffness, poor circulation and lack of energy.

So, in that sense, yoga can absolutely defy much of the gravitational force that compresses the joints, and the gradual calcification of the body and its tissues. Not only can it slow down the ageing process, it can reverse much of it!

Yoga is one of the most effective ways of maintaining your musculoskeletal fitness – your body’s flexibility, balance, muscle strength and coordination – an important indicator of your overall health. A recent study published in the *European Journal of Preventive Cardiology*, which focused on a person’s ability to sit unsupported on the floor and then stand up without using any part of their arm or hand to assist, discovered after several years when some of the subjects died that all of those who had died early had scored very low marks on the test. It concluded that these factors are directly related to longevity.’

as deep breathing, it’s a tried-and-tested stress-buster, helping both body and mind to relax and restore. This helps maintain and even improve your brain power and slows down age-related mental decline. Yoga also improves sleep quality, keeps you slim and graceful, and encourages youthful-looking skin. And that’s just for starters. Read on to discover more...

“*The great thing is that we can begin yoga at any age, it isn’t just for the young*”

Yoga

body benefits

Sure yoga is just for relaxation?
Think again! Here are just a few of the
anti-ageing benefits that will keep you
looking and feeling younger

When it comes to body benefits, you can't beat yoga. No other workout offers such all-round rewards for your body and mind. In just one simple pose, such as High lunge (right), yoga mobilises, strengthens and stretches all your body's muscles, joints, ligaments and tendons while challenging your balance and stimulating your mind.

Combine several yoga poses into a sequence (p110) and these benefits multiply. The folding and unfolding of your body as you move through the poses nourishes your spinal discs and massages your inner organs, triggering a host of wellbeing effects, from aiding digestion to supporting detoxification. Speed up and you boost your cardiovascular system, slow down and you soothe and quieten your mind. Now read on to discover the amazing anti-ageing benefits!

Did you know?

Yoga is a natural form of resistance training. Your muscles have to work hard to support you in each pose.

THE
BENEFITS

BUILDS
YOUR
BALANCE

STAVES OFF
MENTAL
DECLINE

KEEPS YOUR
HEART
HEALTHY

INCREASES
YOUR
FLEXIBILITY

STRENGTHENS
YOUR **MUSCLES**

TONES AND
TIGHTENS
YOUR **BODY**

IMPROVES
YOUR **JOINT**
HEALTH





Stay strong

Yoga is one of the most natural ways to maintain your muscle strength and stamina, keeping you lean and powerful as you grow older

Yes, it does become more difficult to build muscle as we grow older. But ‘difficult’ certainly doesn’t mean ‘impossible’. Far from it, in fact. Yoga can help preserve the muscle you already have, while continuing to add more, say scientists. Researchers at the University of Connecticut, USA looked at two groups of women over 50 across a six-month period.

One group practised yoga at least twice a week, while the other group remained largely sedentary. At the end of the study period, the yoga group demonstrated lower body fat and higher muscle mass, as well as more efficient muscle maintenance.

Build muscle

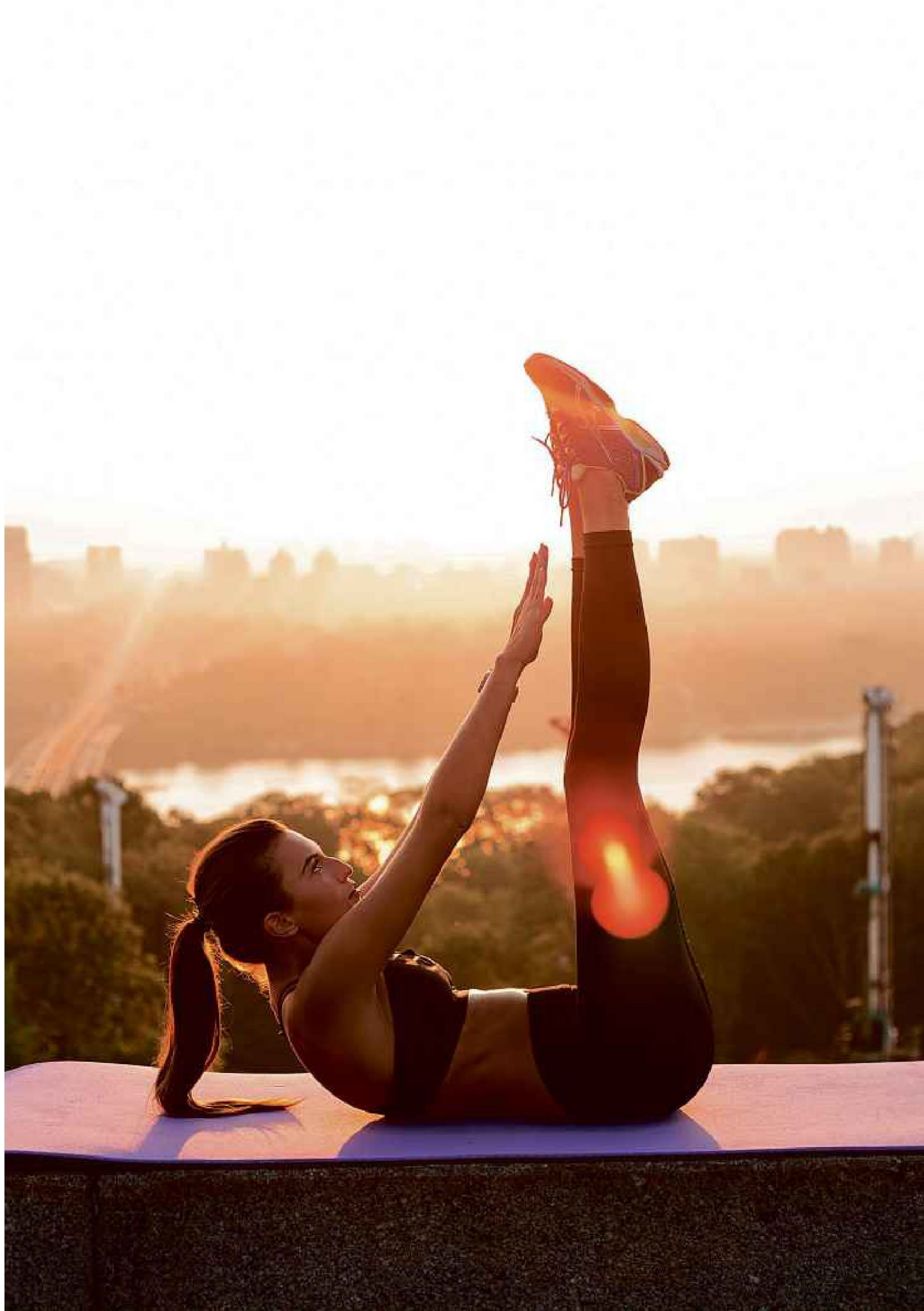
While we think of resistance exercise as that done using weights or machines, in yoga you use the resistance of your own body weight to gradually build strength. As you hold each pose, many of your body’s large muscle groups are engaged in keeping you balanced and stable. Meanwhile, doing repetitions of postures, such as during Boat pose (p88) or Half moon (p62), will also build strength and power.

As you progress, you can gradually start to hold poses for longer or add in more repetitions to a sequence. Yoga helps engage and strengthen the core muscles around your abdominals, hips, lower back and pelvis, and encourages them to work in harmony. Classic core moves to try include Plank (p60) and Bridge (p74).

Did you know?

‘Muscle mass has been proven scientifically to increase longevity,’ says Michele Pernetta.

‘The results of research published in the *Journal of Bone and Mineral Research* showed that women were 63 times more likely to die earlier from low muscle mass and men 11 times more likely. Yoga allows us to build muscle naturally and safely without the need for weights, meaning it is the choice for people of all ages to improve their health.’



Stronger bones

A drop in bone density is a common symptom of ageing, increasing your risk of debilitating conditions such as osteoporosis. However, regular movement and weight-bearing exercise such as yoga can strengthen your bones and keep them healthier for longer. The increased muscle mass

and flexibility that comes with yoga also helps to protect and support your bones, adding to the benefits. There’s even evidence to suggest that yoga can directly reverse loss of bone density.

A 2015 study, published in *Topics in Geriatric Rehabilitation*, found that older women showed significant increases in spinal bone density after practising

a simple yoga routine at least every other day for two years. Most also showed a slight increase in hip bone density. The routine included simple poses such as Tree (p44), Bridge (p74), Warrior II (p48) and Locust (p87). Each pose should be held for 30 seconds, followed by a 30-second break (see p116).



1
Chair
(p42)



2
Downward-
facing dog
(p78)

GOOD FOR
BUILDING
BONES



3
Plank (p60)



6
Triangle
(p52)

6
yoga poses
for better balance



4
Boat
(p88)



5
Locust
(p87)

Get flexible

Want to stay supple and injury free? Yoga can keep your body lithe and limber into old age

As we grow older, our bodies tend to become less flexible – which is very frustrating for those of us who were never that bendy to begin with. The result? Stiffness, joint pain and inflammation – as well as increased risk of injury that can lead to conditions such as arthritis and set you off on the slippery slope to a more sedentary lifestyle.

It's not just your muscles that get stiffer, you also lose flexibility in the connective tissue that surrounds your joints. Yoga's gentle all-body stretching can help address these symptoms by lubricating your joints and keeping your body's connective tissue and muscle soft and supple. By moving your joints through a full range of motion, yoga aids the transport of water and nutrients into your joints, spinal discs and cartilage, keeping them healthier and enabling you to become flexible again. Yoga can even help soothe and improve

back pain. One study on a group of people doing Iyengar yoga found they saw a significant reduction in pain, improvement in spinal mobility and reduced use of medication after just 16 weeks.

Oil your joints

If you already suffer from joint pain, research shows that yoga may alleviate the symptoms and help you regain flexibility. According to a recent study at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences in New Delhi, after just eight weeks of yoga, alongside regular medication, a group of people with rheumatoid arthritis were found to have significantly lower markers of inflammation in their blood, compared with a second group who relied on conventional treatment only. A couple of top yoga poses to start with? Downward-facing dog (p78) is good for boosting all-over flexibility, and stretches out your hamstrings and calves in particular. Easy twist (p107) is another gentle move that



**THE
BENEFITS**





Age is just a number

‘The body is made of up fascia – connective tissue – and if we don’t stretch this, it becomes hardened, meaning we become stiff and our circulation also suffers,’ says Michele Pernetta.

‘Improving your flexibility safely by practising yoga improves our quality of life. Being able to put on our shoes without sitting down, walk up flights of stairs, and not losing our functionality is key to fighting what we call ‘ageing’. You are as old as you feel!’

encourages your body to become more flexible, while simultaneously releasing tension in your spine and hips.

Stay sporty

If you do sport, practising yoga can help you stay at the top of your game. Being more flexible means you’ll be less likely to injure yourself as your

muscles won’t be as tight. Your body will also feel more dynamic during cardiovascular exercise such as running. You can build your flexibility in yoga by holding the postures for an increasing number of seconds or minutes, working in sync with your breath to help you ease out tension.

For the best effects, build up slowly

and practise consistently. An Iyengar or Hatha class is a good place to start to make sure you stretch safely and effectively. Classes that offer flowing yoga sequences such as Sun salutation (p110) can also help increase the elasticity in your muscle fibres. In all, yoga is the perfect complement to more higher-impact workouts.

THE
BENEFITS



2

Reclining twist
(p100)



3

Cow face
(p96)



1

Head-to-knee
forward bend
(p93)

GOOD FOR
RELEASING
TIGHT
HIPS



6

Garland
(p58)

6

yoga poses
for flexibility

4

Cobbler
(p90)



5

Reclining
hand-to-big
toe (p98)





Better balance

Feeling less nimble than you were as a child? Yoga can help you find your poise and stay centred in any situation

Yoga's slow, measured movements and muscle-strengthening poses don't just help improve your posture.

They can also strengthen your sense of balance, helping you stay physically and mentally centred. And they can future-proof your life, helping prevent falls and injury later on. Yoga can even be used to improve balance as part of a rehabilitation programme after serious illness, according to a study at Indiana University, USA. Stroke patients who did a two-month course of twice-weekly yoga classes showed a 15 per cent boost in balance scores.

Use it or lose it

Remember how easy it felt to ice skate or skip along a wall when you were a child? Often, as adults, our

lack of balance is simply due to the fact we no longer do the wide range of activities we used to. Most of us rarely do anything more than sitting or standing on two feet, walking or perhaps climbing some stairs. If you sit at a desk all day and then slump on the sofa watching TV in the evenings, your body is not being challenged and so your sense of balance can start to wane. Combine this with the fact that your body naturally loses muscle mass as you age (unless you try to maintain it), and you can gradually become less stable on your feet when challenges arise, whether it be on a ski slope or a slippery pavement.

Balancing act

Yoga helps safely challenge your body's sense of balance by requiring you to hold challenging postures,

often while supporting yourself on one leg, your hands or even your shoulders or head. Flowing yoga sequences also improve your balance and agility as you learn to transition from pose to pose. It's one reason why yoga is so popular with sports people such as surfers and skiers. Remember, practise makes perfect – the more you do the poses and hone your technique and focus, the more confident you'll become.

Not only do yoga's balancing poses help you feel more physically stable, they can also improve your mental poise, helping you stay centred when difficult situations arise. Studies show that these poses also help improve

Did you know?

We lose the capacity to balance on one leg by several seconds each decade over the age of 55 but this capacity can be regained with the sort of practice a yoga class provides.

focus, concentration and even memory. Tree pose (p44) is one effective way of working on your wobbles.

Start by standing next to a wall so you can reach for support if needed. Balance your weight on your left leg then bring the sole of your right foot as high up your left leg as you can, pressing it into your calf or thigh. Place your palms together in front of your chest and hold for 30 seconds, then switch legs. As you progress, you can open your arms out like a tree – and move away from that wall! Try doing this pose before a stressful situation, such as a work presentation. You'll find you feel far more calm and focused



THE
BENEFITS

GOOD FOR
IMPROVING
FOCUS

1
Hand-to-
big-toe
pose
(p66)

2
Crescent moon
(p56)

3
Eagle (p64)

6
yoga poses
for better balance

6
Extended
mountain
pose
(p41)

5
Tree pose
(p44)

4
Warrior III
(p50)

Boost your brain

Want to increase your memory, stay sharp and feel happy? Here's why it's time to hit the mat

Repeat after us: mental decline is not inevitable. Of course, our brain ages with the rest of our body: the frontal lobe and hippocampus – areas involved in higher cognitive function and forming new memories – start to shrink as we reach our late 60s and 70s, for instance. But just as with any other muscle, a 'use it or lose it' approach can go a long way towards addressing any downturn – scientists now know that the brain can renew itself, creating new cells and neural pathways. And yoga can play a big part in this process.

Better brain power

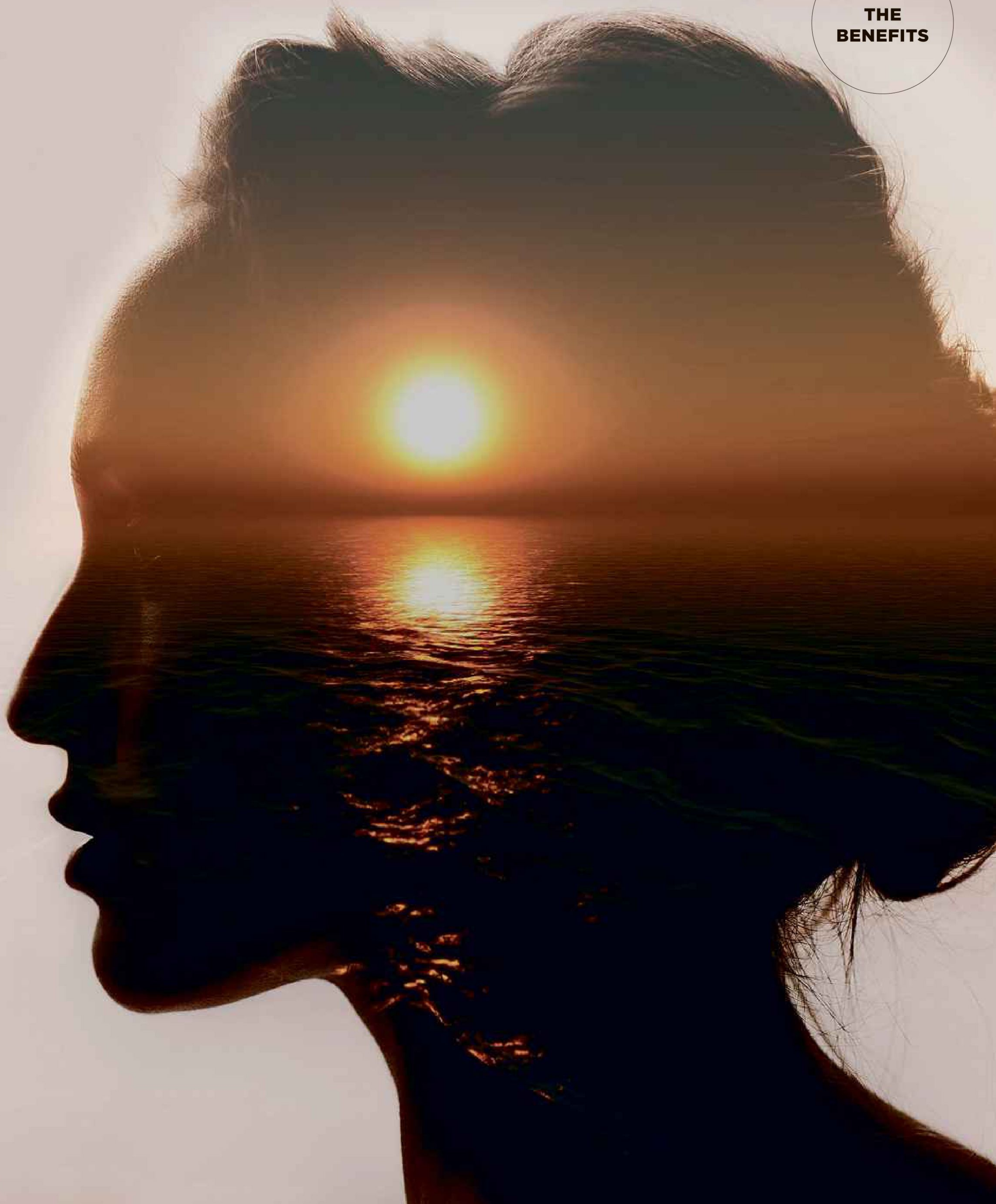
Doing yoga for just 20 minutes is shown to stimulate brain function immediately afterwards, according to a study at the University of Illinois, USA. A single yoga session significantly improved participants' speed and accuracy on working memory tests and inhibitory control

– both of which are key measures of the brain's ability to maintain focus and process new information. It's worth noting, too, that this effect wasn't seen after the group had done aerobic exercise for the same amount of time. As with any form of exercise, yoga helps boost circulation, improving blood flow to the brain. But it also offers specific key benefits. Inversion poses found in yoga, such as Downward-facing dog (p78) or Shoulderstand (p76), where your head is lower than your legs, draw blood supply to your brain, nourishing it with oxygen and nutrients.

Younger mind

Furthermore, researchers suggest that yoga's breathing and meditative exercises may also keep your grey matter in good shape by boosting levels of key anti-ageing hormones in the brain. An example? Regular deep meditation dramatically increases production of DHEA – a key hormonal marker of physiological age and

**THE
BENEFITS**





resistance to disease – according to top US anti-ageing researcher Dr Vincent Giampapa. Other studies show that calming meditative practices such as yoga increase the area of the brain involved with learning, attention and memory.

Calming influence

And ever wondered why you feel so calm when you leave the yoga studio? Studies show that production of stress hormone cortisol is greatly reduced during mindful exercise such as yoga and, particularly, during meditation and yogic breathing exercises. This is one of the reasons why many athletes

have added yoga to their training programmes – it helps them stay focused under pressure, shut out distractions and stay ‘in the zone’.

Specific poses that are thought to help improve focus include one-legged balance poses such as Half moon (p62) and Eagle (p64). As you learn to stay still in the poses, you learn to increase your attention. But it’s not just challenging poses that can offer benefits, relaxing forms of yoga such as Yin and Restorative can also be particularly beneficial for de-stressing and restoring your brain. Time to say ‘om...’

Did you know?

Yoga helps the mind stay relaxed as well as the body, improving mood and energy levels.





1
Standing
forward
fold
(p70)



2
Shoulderstand
(p76)



3
Child's pose
(p94)

GOOD FOR
IMPROVING
SLEEP



6
Plough
(p77)

6
yoga poses
to boost your brain



5
Savasana
(p102)

4
Waterfall
pose
(p123)





Look younger

Did you know yoga can help you look more youthful? Here's why this ancient practice is a natural beauty booster

Loss of elasticity, environmental damage and the effects of stress all take their toll on our skin as we age. But you didn't really need to be reminded of that, did you? The good news is that yoga can help address these beauty bugbears in a number of ways – not least by boosting your circulation, which increases blood flow and transports anti-ageing nutrients to your skin to encourage a clearer, brighter complexion. By keeping underlying muscles toned, the skin covering those muscles will be firmer, too. And because yoga reduces stress, it helps discourage the clenched jaws and furrowed brows that can take a toll on your skin and its appearance over time.

Face yoga

Certain yoga poses are particularly known for their beauty benefits. Inversion poses and forward bends such as Standing forward fold (p70) are not just tension-busting. With your head hanging below your heart, fresh blood is delivered to your face, oxygenating and nourishing your skin, leaving your complexion bright and glowing too. These poses also boost your lymphatic system, helping eliminate the toxins that can cause dull, sluggish skin.

Backbends such as Camel (p82) not only energise you and boost your breathing to oxygenate your skin. As you tilt your head backwards, these poses also stretch your neck, lifting and firming your jaw line. Side bends such as Triangle (p52) have a similar

stretching and lifting effect on the muscles in the side of your face. And finally, twisting or revolved poses such as Revolved chair (p43), also boost your skin by improving digestion and aiding detoxification in your inner organs. No wonder you leave that yoga class with a glow!

Beauty sleep

Nothing ages your skin more than a poor night's sleep. A wealth of research has found that yoga can

encourage deeper, better quality slumber. A study from the Swami Vivekananda Yoga Research Foundation, for example, found that older adults who practised yoga at bedtime fell asleep faster, slept longer and felt more rested the following day than those who took a herbal remedy. So it's well worth getting into the habit of doing a few simple stretches or restful poses such as Child's pose (p94) or Cobbler (p91), each night. Your skin will thank you for it!

Lean and slim

Yoga will also keep your body looking younger. By building more lean muscle mass, you'll stay toned, slim and shapely as you age. Your clothes will hang better on you and your waistband won't feel as tight. By improving your posture, yoga can help you look taller and leaner and give you a youthful grace and agility. Research also shows yoga can boost your body confidence, allowing your inner beauty to shine through.

Detox your skin

'Sweating helps detoxify the skin, which is why yoga in a heated room can be particularly beneficial,' says Michele Pernetta. 'It removes toxins such as heavy metals and chemicals from your body. The skin is the largest organ of the body, and sweating is healthy, so if we exercise our skin then it can take better care of us by functioning correctly – it will also look younger, pinker and more glowing.'



**THE
BENEFITS**

1

Camel
(p82)



2

Seated side
bend
(p106)



3

Wide-legged
forward fold
(p72)



6

Reclining
twist
(p100)



**GOOD FOR
DETOXING
THE BODY**

6

**yoga poses
for youthful looks**

4

Seated
side twist
(p107)



5

Cobra (p80)



Stay healthy

From protecting your heart to helping your hormones, yoga is proven to help keep age-related conditions at bay

Risk of heart disease increases as we grow older. The reason? Our blood vessels lose their flexibility and fatty deposits tend to build up on the artery walls, both of which can hinder blood flow. Yoga works to counter this, by helping to keep your blood pressure under control. A 2013 review of 17 studies identified a significant link between yoga and blood-pressure reduction. The researchers suggest that controlled yogic breathing in particular lowers nervous-system activity, which in turn manages blood-pressure levels.

Have heart

A study published in the *European Journal of Preventative Cardiology* found that getting on your mat reduces total cholesterol in your blood, improving artery health which, in turn, lowers your risk of heart disease. Meanwhile, research presented at the European Society of Cardiology congress in

Paris, found that a three-month programme of daily yoga while recovering from heart surgery greatly reduced the risk of suffering another attack. Again, the researchers highlighted how yoga and breathing exercises can reduce stress on the heart.

Lose weight

Have you noticed the pounds creeping on as you get older? Numerous studies show that yoga can help you lose weight and maintain a healthy body mass index (BMI) and hip-to-waist ratio. Choose a more energetic type of class or sequence, such as Bikram (hot yoga) or Vinyasa flow, and you could burn up to 400 calories a session. And by increasing your lean muscle mass, all yoga boosts your metabolism, meaning your body will burn more calories even when at rest.

But it's not just the more active types of yoga that can help. Research also shows that Restorative yoga and poses such as Savasana (p102) aid







weight loss by switching on your body's parasympathetic system which regulates breathing, digestion and hormones, helping balance your weight.

Research shows that those who practise yoga tend to have better appetite control, fewer cravings and eat more mindfully. By teaching us to connect with our breath, yoga teaches us to be more mindful and pay attention to the present moment, and this translates into to daily life. Ultimately, it doesn't matter how old you are or how much yoga you've done in the past: building it into your routine today can help safeguard your body and mind for tomorrow.

Hormonal helper

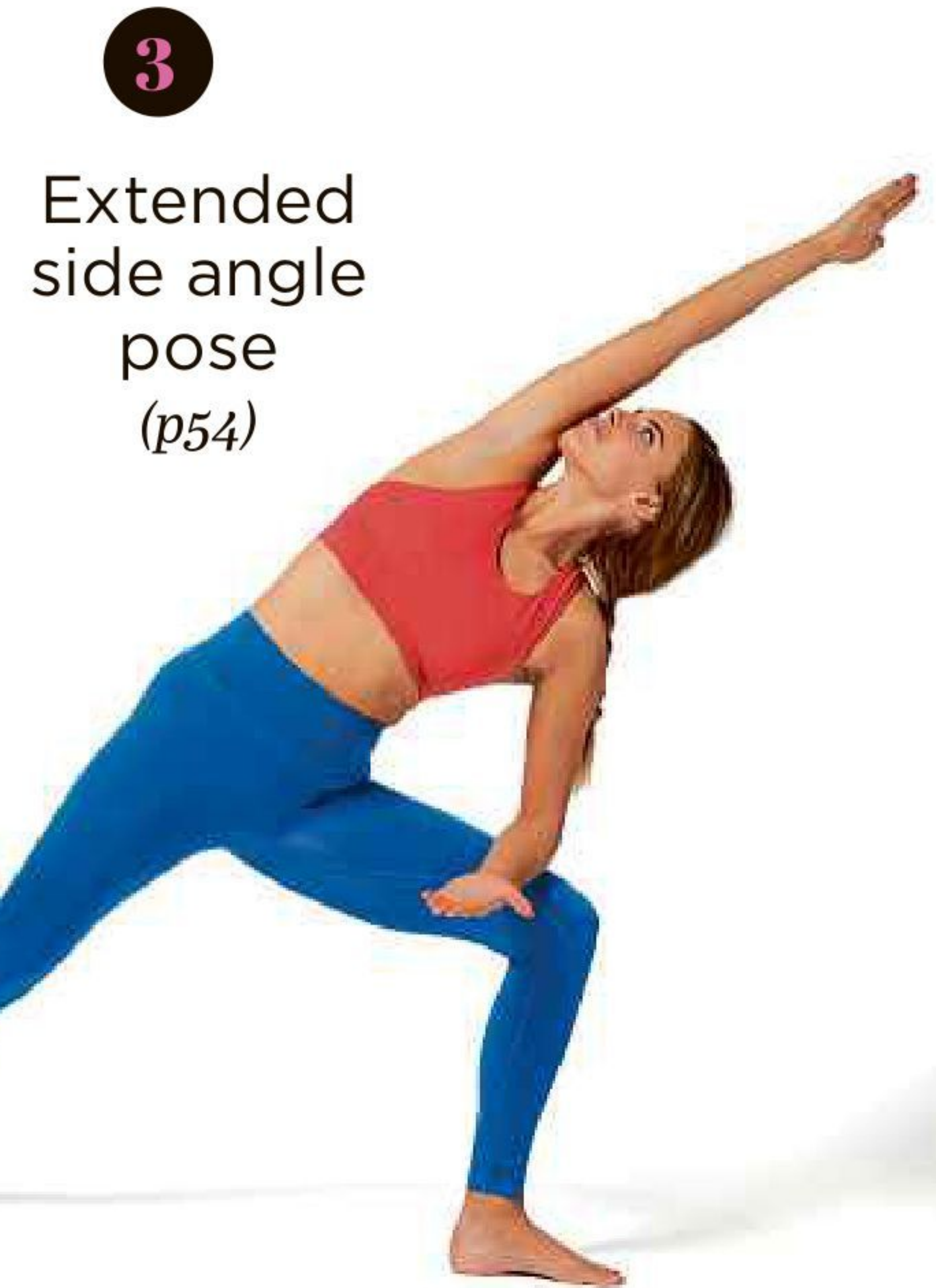
The dramatic drop in oestrogen levels during the years leading up to and during the menopause is associated with a whole raft of unpleasant symptoms, from hot flushes and sleepless nights to dry hair and accelerated skin ageing. However, there's a wealth of evidence to suggest that yoga can be an effective way of addressing at least some of these hormonal changes. Its positive effect on stress levels and poor sleep is hugely beneficial at this time, of course. And a 2013 study of menopausal women found that a 12-week yoga programme generally improved their quality of life and reduced the extent to which hot flushes interfered with daily life. Top poses to practise during the menopause include Bridge (p74), Downward-facing dog (p78) and Head-to-knee forward bend (p93).

THE
BENEFITS

1
Four-limbed
staff pose
(p113)



2
Upward facing
dog (p81)



3
Extended
side angle
pose
(p54)



6
Warrior II
(p48)

6
yoga poses
for weight loss

5
Savasana
(p102)



GOOD FOR
CARDIO
FITNESS



4
Boat pose
(p88)



Before *you* start

It's time to start practising yoga but, before you do, read these tips to ensure you get the most from your sessions

One of the joys of yoga is you can practise it anytime, anywhere. Want to kickstart your day? Try a dynamic sequence. Feeling stressed at work? Do a few stretches at your desk. Can't sleep? Wind down with a calming sequence. Building a regular practice will bring a wealth of benefits. Just 10 minutes a day can

make a difference. The other bonus is you don't need lots of kit, just turn up on your mat with a willing mind! However, following a few guidelines and investing in a few props can maximise the benefits.

Prepare to practise

■ Set a time. Decide when and where you'll practise yoga and put it in your diary. Having a fixed date

will help you stick to your intentions.

■ Create a space. You don't have to practise yoga in the same place every time but a dedicated, quiet space can enhance your experience. If you're practising at home, choose a room where you have enough space to stretch and you won't be disturbed.

■ Avoid eating or gulping water straight before yoga as many poses compress your abdomen.

Stay safe

Always check with your GP or health practitioner before you start practising yoga. Ensure you have expert tuition, from a yoga class or the instructions in this book. Start slowly with a beginner's class, or basic postures at home, taking your time to learn the foundations and technique, before moving on to more complicated poses and sequences. This way, you'll avoid injury and get more benefits. Yoga is proven to have therapeutic benefits for health conditions, from back pain to asthma. Here are some tips.

Back problems

If you have disc pain, avoid forward folds such as Standing forward fold (p70) or poses that cause your spine to round, such as Seated forward bend (p92) which can compress your discs. Gentle back bend poses such as Cobra (p80) are a better choice.

Blood pressure

If you have low blood pressure, avoid moving suddenly from standing to a forward fold as it can exacerbate dizziness. Avoid transitions that put your head below your heart. If you have high blood pressure, avoid inverted poses such as Shoulderstand (p76) and backbends such as Camel (p82).

Arthritis

If you have arthritis pain in your hands and wrists, avoid weight-bearing poses that load these areas, such as Downward-facing dog (p78).

Osteoporosis

Having low bone density makes your spine more fragile so talk to your GP to decide on safe postures. It might be wise to limit forward folds or twists. Approach them carefully or omit them from your practice altogether.

What you need



✦ The most important piece of kit for your practice is a 'sticky' **yoga mat**. It will help prevent your feet from slipping in standing poses and support your body in sitting and reclining postures.



A foam **yoga block** is a versatile prop. Try sitting on it to align your spine in poses such as Cobbler (p90) or place it beneath your head for support in poses such as Savasana (p102).



A **yoga strap** is another way to achieve a pose if your arms or legs won't reach, for instance in Reclining hand-to-big toe pose (p98).



A **yoga bolster** provides a comfy support in relaxation poses, helping you stretch without strain. Try popping it under your knees in Savasana (p102).



Made from wood or foam, **yoga bricks** are thicker and sturdier than blocks. They create a handy extension for your arm in poses such as Triangle (p52) or Half moon (p62).



A folded **yoga blanket** will provide support, for instance under your shoulders in Shoulderstand (p76) or under your feet in Garland (p58). It also keeps you warm during relaxation and meditation.





Stay-young poses

Now you've learned about yoga's amazing **anti-ageing** benefits, it's time to hit the mat and try some poses! In the following section, you'll find some of the classic yoga postures that are the **foundations** of a regular yoga practice. Each one comes with its own specific benefits for body and mind, including the **stay-young** benefits outlined in the first section of this book. Work your way through the poses, following the **step-by-step guides** to learn how to perform each one correctly and safely. Then, once you've got the hang of them, you can focus on the poses that are best for your needs, or try the yoga **sequences** in the next section of this book. Let's get started.

Mountain pose

Tadasana

■ Stand with your feet together, inner edges parallel. Balance your weight evenly over each foot, spread your toes and root into the ground, through your big and little toes. Lift your inner arches by drawing your ankles away from each other.

■ Align your knees over your ankles and your pelvis over your knees. Relax your buttocks and allow your tail and sitting bones to release towards the floor. Breathe deeply and evenly.

■ Draw your navel towards your spine and release your shoulders down your back. Hold your arms out to the sides, palms facing forwards and extend through to your fingertips. Release and lengthen the back of your neck.

■ Inhale, root through your feet and extend your body through to the crown of your head. Breathe evenly, feeling the lengthening of your body with each in-breath, and a sense of grounding and stability on each out-breath.

■ Stay in the pose for up to 20 to 30 seconds.



Tip

Mountain pose
is the starting
position for most
standing poses
But it's also a
beneficial pose
to practise
in itself.



Benefits

- ⇒ Improves your posture
- ⇒ Boosts your balance
- ⇒ Improves your alignment
- ⇒ Strengthens your bones



Extended mountain pose

Uttitha hasta tadasana

- From Mountain pose, inhale and root through your feet.
- Lift your waist out of your hips to lengthen your spine. At the same time, turn your palms inwards and extend your arms in a large circle out to the sides of your body and overhead.
- Ground through your feet as you reach through to your fingertips, drawing your navel to your spine, and your shoulder blades down your back (A).
- Gaze softly ahead and hold for 20 to 30 seconds.

Side stretch (B)

- From Extended Mountain pose, exhale and reach both arms over to your left, feeling the stretch in your right side (B).
- Don't let your torso bend forwards or backwards. Take two to three breaths, then inhale back to upright. Repeat on the other side.



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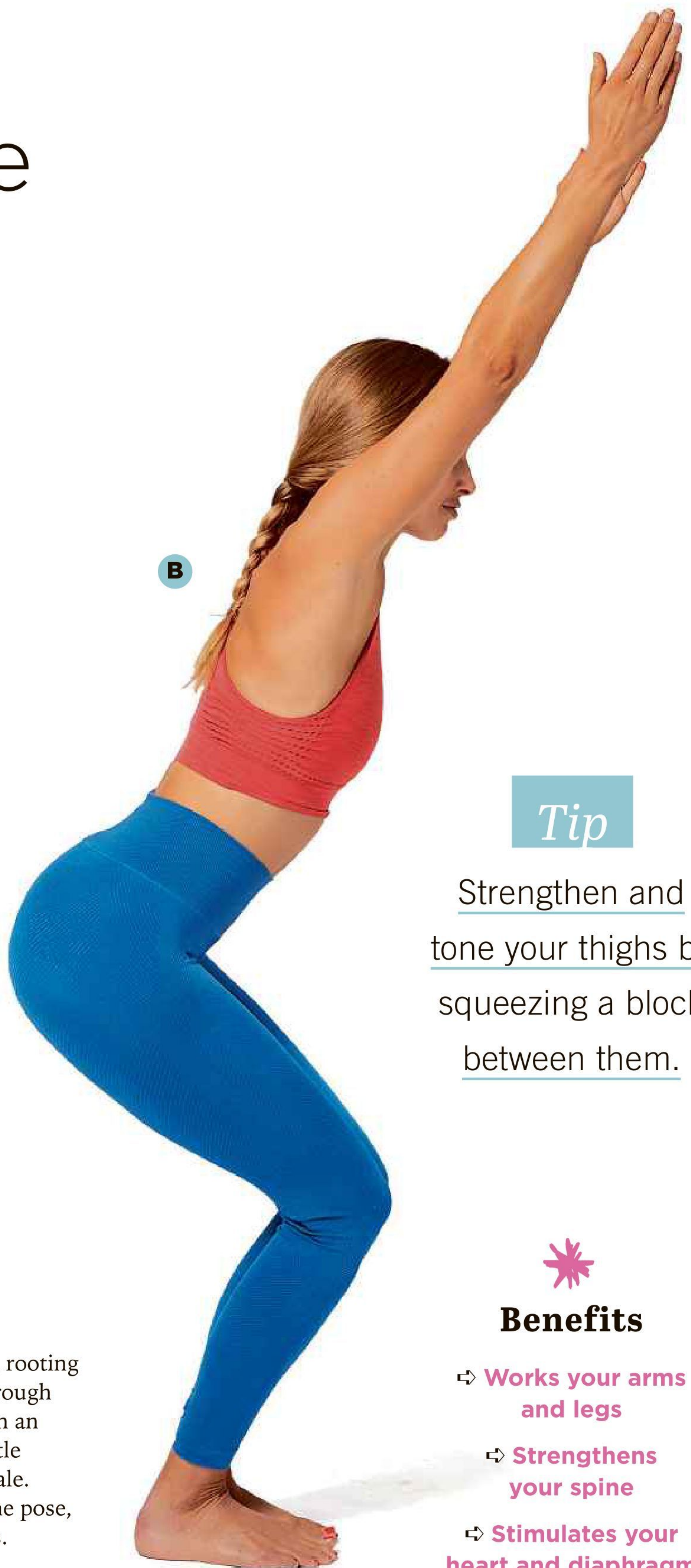


Benefits

- ⇒ Stretches your arms and shoulders
- ⇒ Eases your digestion
- ⇒ Improves your balance

Chair pose

Utkatasana



■ Begin in Mountain pose (p40) with your feet together (A). Inhale and lift your arms over your head with your palms facing inwards and fingers spread.

■ As you exhale, bend your knees deeply, as if you're sitting down into a chair (B). Don't let your knees project over your toes.

■ Gaze straight ahead, relax your shoulders and engage your core by drawing your belly button to your spine.

■ Lengthen your spine and extend through your hands to your fingertips, while drawing your arms into your shoulder sockets. Keep your neck in line

with your spine.

■ Take five breaths, rooting and lengthening through to your fingertips on an inhale; sinking a little deeper on each exhale.

■ To come out of the pose, straighten your legs. Repeat three times.

Tip

Strengthen and tone your thighs by squeezing a block between them.



Benefits

⇒ Works your arms and legs

⇒ Strengthens your spine

⇒ Stimulates your heart and diaphragm

Revolved chair pose

Parivrtta utkatasana

- From Chair pose, bring your hands into prayer position at your chest, then inhale and lengthen your spine.
- Exhale and twist to the right, bringing your left elbow to rest against your outer right thigh.
- Press your palms together and lever your left arm against your right thigh to deepen the twist, keeping your knees aligned.
- If comfortable for your neck, turn your gaze upwards.
- Take a few breaths and then return to Chair pose. Repeat on the other side.



Benefits

- ⇒ Strengthens your legs and hips
- ⇒ Stretches your spine
- ⇒ Aids detoxification

Tree

Vrksasana



A

■ From Mountain pose (p40), root your left foot into the ground and transfer your weight onto your left leg (A).

■ Keeping a slight bend in your left knee, place the outer side of your right foot against the front of your left thigh. To help you balance, focus your eyes on a point straight ahead of you.

■ Press your foot into your thigh and turn your knee out to the side. Engage your core and keep your tailbone extended towards the floor.

■ Lift out of your waist and up through your crown, keeping your shoulders relaxed and chest lifted.

■ Slowly bring your hands

to Prayer position (B). Take a few breaths here.

■ To come out of the pose, exhale and gently lower your hands and foot to the start position. Repeat on the other side.



B



Benefits

- ⇒ Improves your balance and focus
- ⇒ Opens your hips and shoulder joints
- ⇒ Strengthens your leg muscles



Tip

Challenge your balance by practising the pose with your eyes closed.

Modification

■ If you find it hard to balance or find the full pose hard on your knees, press the sole of your right foot into your inner left thigh or your calf and turn your knee out to the side, keeping your tailbone towards the floor and core engaged.



Benefits

- ⇒ **Good for beginners**
- ⇒ **Aids your balance**
- ⇒ **Gentler on your knees**

Warrior I

Virabhadrasana I



■ Start in Mountain pose (p40), with your feet together (A).

■ Inhale and step your right leg back a leg's distance, turning your foot out to 45 degrees and keeping your left foot facing ahead.

■ Keep your hips facing forwards, draw your left hip back and your right hip slightly forwards.

■ Inhale and raise your arms over your head, keeping them parallel with your palms facing each other. Draw your shoulders down and

look straight ahead.

■ Exhale and bend your left knee to 90 degrees, over your ankle. Sink your hips down, feeling a gentle stretch in your hips (B).

■ Root through your feet and lift your inner arches, feeling the stretch in your inner thigh.

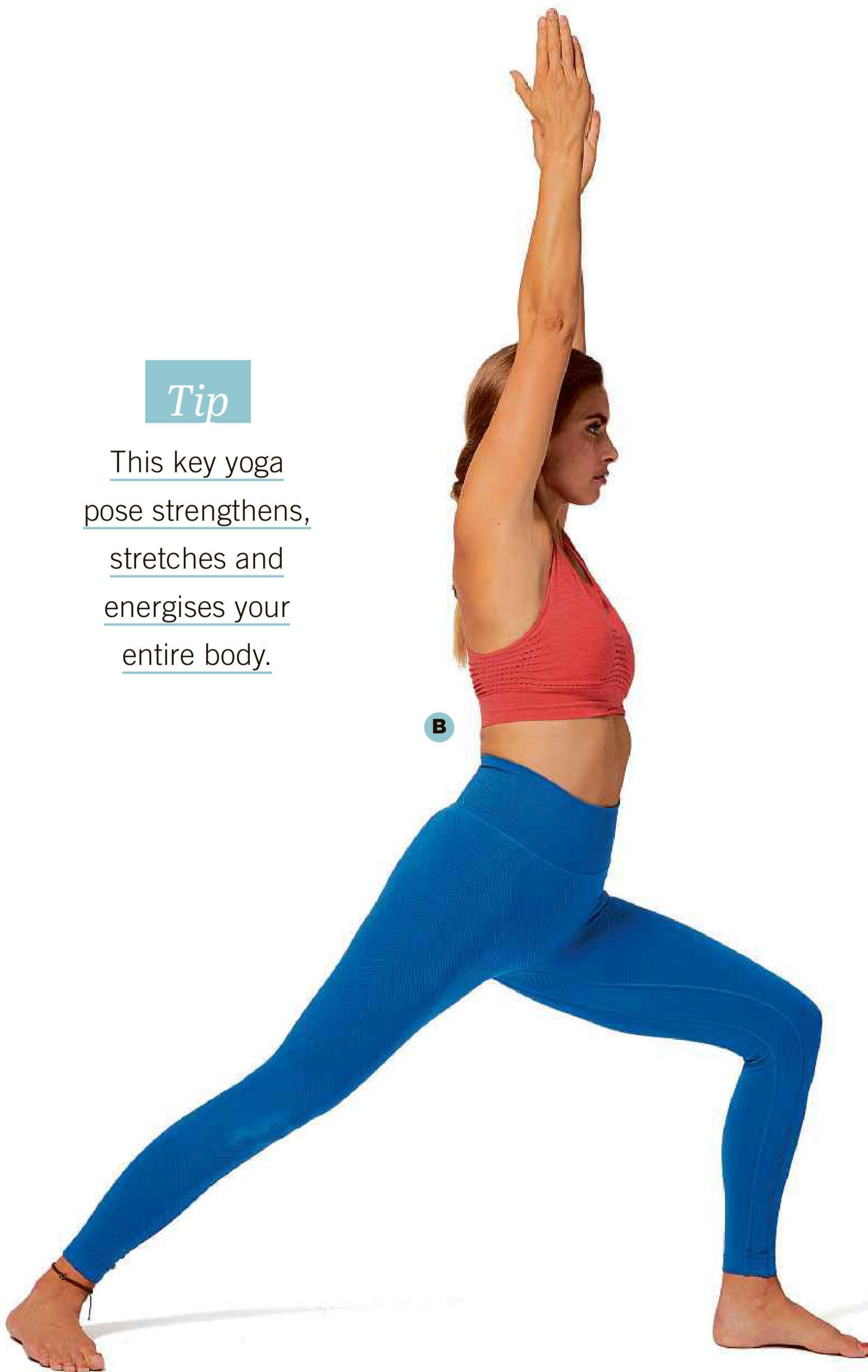
■ Stay here for five to 10 deep breaths.

■ To release the pose, inhale, exhale and press down into your right foot to come up.

■ Pause then repeat on the other side.

Tip

This key yoga pose strengthens, stretches and energises your entire body.



Benefits

- ⇒ **Tones your arms and shoulders**
- ⇒ **Strengthens your legs and bottom**
- ⇒ **Improves your circulation and breathing**

Warrior II

Virabhadrasana II



■ Starting in Mountain pose (p40) (A), place your hands on your hips, step your left leg forwards so your feet are a little wider than a leg's-distance apart. Turn your right foot out 90 degrees and your left foot in 15 degrees. Keep your torso facing forwards (B).
■ Inhale and take your arms

out parallel to the floor, palms facing down. Stretch through your fingers and slide your shoulder blades down your back. Make sure your core is engaged.
■ On an exhale, bend your left knee to 90 degrees, your knee over your ankle. Lift your inner arches, root down through

the outer edges of your feet and firm the back of your thighs to help you balance.
■ Turn your head and gaze along your left arm (C).
■ Stay in the pose for five to 10 deep breaths.
■ To come out of the pose inhale, straighten your left leg and repeat on the other side.



Tip

To work your arms, rotate your palms and inner elbows up to face the ceiling and then back down.



Benefits

- ⇒ Improves your stamina
- ⇒ Strengthens your legs and arms
- ⇒ Therapeutic for osteoporosis and sciatica

Warrior III

Virabhadrasana III



Tip

Try varying the position of your arms, taking them out to the sides or reaching them back, palms facing up.

■ Begin in Mountain pose (p40) (A).
 ■ Raise your arms overhead then step forwards onto your left foot, rooting down into the floor. When you feel grounded, shift your weight into your left leg.

■ Exhale and lift your right leg up behind you, tilting your torso and arms forwards. Engage your core and rotate your right thigh out to keep your hips level.
 ■ Firm your left thigh and point the toes of

your right leg down.
 ■ Continue tilting forwards until your arms are straight in front of you, parallel to the floor, palms facing each other. Your arms create a straight line with your head, torso and

raised leg. Feel your leg and arm are stretching in opposite directions (B).
 ■ Stay in the pose for five to 10 breaths here. Then, inhale, step back to Mountain pose and repeat on the other side.



Modification

■ If you're a beginner or find it hard to balance, try this easier pose.

■ Raise your arms overhead then step forwards onto your left foot, rooting down into the floor. When you

feel grounded, shift your weight into your left leg.

■ Exhale and lift your right leg up behind you to around 45 degrees. Bring your hands into Prayer position and tilt your torso slightly forwards, keeping your hips level.

■ Firm your left thigh and point the toes of your right leg down towards the floor, palms facing each other.

■ Stay in the pose for five to 10 breaths here. Then, inhale, step back to Mountain pose and repeat on the other side.



Benefits

⇒ **Tones your stomach**

⇒ **Strengthens your legs and ankles**

⇒ **Firms your hips and bottom**

Triangle

Utthita trikonasana



■ Stand sideways on your mat and step your feet a leg's-length apart.

■ Turn your left foot out 90 degrees and your right foot in 15 degrees. Align your heels, then root down through your big and little toes and the outer edge of your right foot.

■ Inhale and extend your arms out to the sides at shoulder height, palms facing down (A).

■ Exhale, and keeping your arms parallel to the floor, reach your left hand outwards as far as is comfortable, before releasing it down to rest

where it naturally lands, on your calf or ankle.

■ On your next inhale, float your right arm overhead and rotate open your chest, so your right shoulder is above the left and your arms are in a straight line. Let your gaze rest on the floor or, if comfortable for your neck, turn your head to look up at your top hand (B).

■ On each inhale ground

through your feet and lengthen your side body.

On each exhale, release further into the bend. Remain in the pose five to 10 breaths, breathing deeply into your belly.

■ To release, root through your feet and inhale up to standing, then exhale as you lower your arms and step your feet together.

■ Repeat on the other side.



Benefits

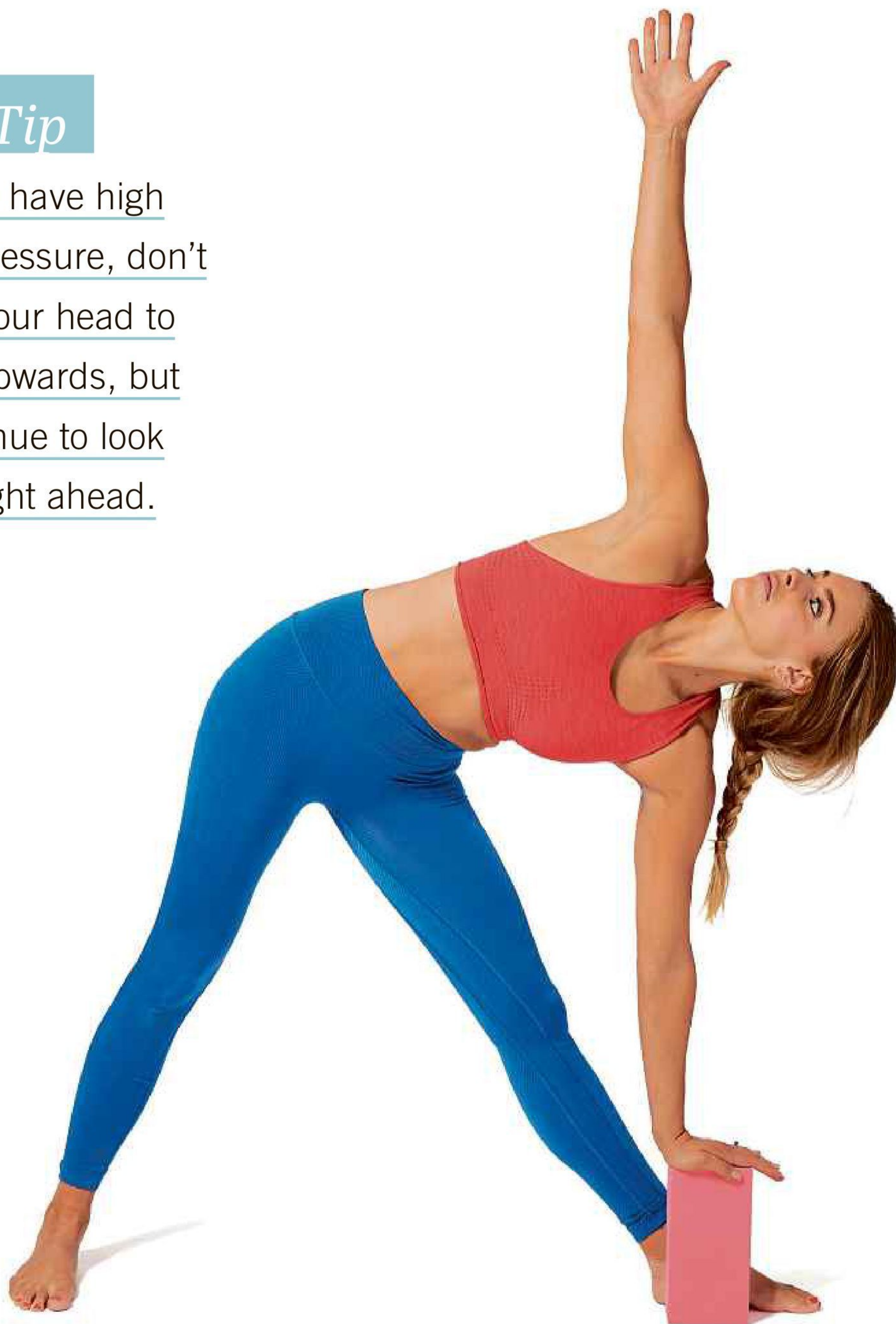
⇒ **Relieves stiffness in your back, hips and neck**

⇒ **Improves your breathing and digestion**

⇒ **Relieves stress**

Tip

If you have high blood pressure, don't turn your head to look upwards, but continue to look straight ahead.

**Modification**

■ If you struggle to reach the floor with your hand or fingertips, place a block in front of you before you start, and use it to support your palm on.

**Benefits**

- ⇒ Suitable for beginners
- ⇒ Eases stiffness
- ⇒ Aids balance

Extended side angle pose

Uttitha parsvakonasana



■ Step your feet wide and turn your left foot out 90 degrees, your right foot in 15 degrees. Align your left heel to your right instep and root through your toes and the outer

edge of your right foot.

■ Balance your weight evenly between both feet, inhale and raise your arms to the sides at shoulder height (A).

■ Exhale, bend your left

knee over your ankle, and take your left forearm to your left thigh and your right hand to your right hip.

■ Tilt your tailbone towards your right heel and

rotate your chest upwards and open. Then, on an inhale, take your right arm overhead, alongside your ear, palm facing down (B).

■ Ground through the outer edge of your back

Tip

For a more advanced pose, place your hand down onto the floor on the inside or outside of your foot, or use a block.



B

and lengthen your right side all the way to your finger tips. Gaze at the floor or, if comfortable for your neck, at your upper hand.

■ Remain in the pose for a

few deep breaths, feeling the stretch.

■ When you feel ready, exhale and come back up to standing.

■ Pause, and repeat on the other side.



Benefits

- ⇒ Improves your breathing
- ⇒ Increases your stamina
- ⇒ Strengthens and stretches your spine, shoulders and legs

Crescent moon

Anjaneyasana



A



B



C

Tip

If you have back problems, keep your hands on your thigh to begin with.

■ Start in Mountain pose (p40) (A). Fold forwards from your hips and place your hands either side of your feet, resting on your fingertips.
■ Take a large step back with your right leg, resting on the ball of your foot. Lower your right knee to the floor, sliding your foot back until it's flat on the floor and you feel a stretch in your left hip

and thigh. Keep your left knee bent over your ankle.
■ Keep your hips low and square. Ground through your feet and raise the inner arch of your left foot. Place your hands on your left thigh, take your left hip back and your right hip forwards to square them (B).
■ Inhale, engage your core and lift your chest up, sweeping your arms up overhead to parallel.

Lengthen your spine out of your pelvis and draw your shoulder blades down your spine. Keep your gaze straight ahead (C).

■ Exhale and, if you feel comfortable, come back into a gentle backbend lifting your gaze up to your hands.
■ Breathe evenly for five breaths, then exhale, lower your hands back down and step back to Downward-facing dog (p78).



Benefits

- ⇒ Improves your balance
- ⇒ Strengthens your legs and back
- ⇒ Stretches your hips and thighs



High lunge

Alanasana

■ Start in Mountain pose (p40) with your feet hip-width apart.
 ■ Fold forwards from your hips and place your hands either side of your feet, resting on your fingertips. Take a large step straight back with your right leg, to rest on the ball of your

foot. Straighten your leg and extend through your heel. Keep your right knee over your right ankle.

■ Put your hands on your left thigh, take your right hip forwards and left hip back to square your pelvis (A).

■ Engage your core then,

on your next inhale, sweep your arms out to the sides and overhead to parallel with your palms facing (B).

■ Breathe evenly for five deep breaths, then exhale and release your arms, stepping your back foot forwards to Mountain pose.

■ Repeat on the other side.



Benefits

⇒ **Builds your stamina**

⇒ **Strengthens your body**

⇒ **Opens your hips and groin**

Garland

Malasana



■ Centre yourself in Mountain pose (p40) (A). Once you feel grounded, step your feet a little wider than hip-width apart.

■ Inhale, and on an exhale, gently lower down on your toes into a low squat, taking your hands to the floor in front of you.

■ Turn your feet out, so your knees are over your toes, then lower your heels, taking your feet as far apart as is needed for your heels to firmly settle into the floor. If your heels still don't touch the floor, place a folded blanket beneath them.

■ Lift your hands into Prayer position and release

your tailbone to the mat (B).

■ Press your palms together and root through your feet, pushing your upper arms into your inner thighs, your thighs into your arms. This will help you lift out of your pelvis to lengthen through your spine.

■ Draw your shoulder blades down your back and let your chest expand.

■ Take five to 10 deep breaths into your belly.

■ When you're ready to come out, release your hands and come to a comfortable seated position for a few breaths while you absorb the effects of the pose.

Tip

Garland is said to restore sexual energy by improving circulation to your groin area.



Benefits

- ⇒ **Loosens your hips**
- ⇒ **Stretches your back and groin**
- ⇒ **Boosts mental focus**

Plank

Kumbhakasana



A

■ Start on all fours with your hands shoulder-width apart, directly beneath your shoulders. Next spread your fingers, root through the base of your thumb and index fingers and straighten your elbows without locking them.

■ Step your feet back, resting on the balls of your feet, and straighten your legs to create a line from your heels to the crown of your head (A).

■ Tuck in your chin to keep the back of your neck long. Reach your heels to the back of the mat, and extend right through to the crown of your head.

■ Draw your navel to your spine to engage your core and spread your

shoulder blades apart.

■ Breathe evenly for five to 10 breaths, then exhale and lower gently back to your knees.

One-legged plank (B)

■ For a more challenging pose that strengthens and stretches your arms and legs, from Plank (A), inhale and lift your right leg up behind you, parallel to the floor (B). Press your



B

VARIATION



raised heel back and extend through the crown of your head, keeping your core engaged and tailbone in.

■ Hold for up to 30 seconds. To release, exhale and lower your foot to the floor.

■ Repeat on the other leg.



Benefits

⇒ **Strengthens and tones your entire body**

⇒ **Builds stamina**

⇒ **Boosts your bones**

Tip

If Plank is new to you, start on your knees and tops of your toes and build your strength gradually.



Side plank
Vasisthasana

- From Plank, inhale and press your left hand into the floor and roll onto the outside edge of your left foot.
- As you exhale, stack your right side over your left so your right ankle, knee, hip and shoulder are over your left ankle, knee, hip and shoulder.
- Keep your left hand beneath your shoulder and root into the ground.
- Draw your navel to your spine and lift the left side of your body so it doesn't collapse. Inhale and raise your right arm to the ceiling (A). Open your

chest, and look straight ahead. If you need to, bend your top knee and rest your foot in front of the knee of your straight leg.

- Take five to 10 deep breaths then lower on an exhalation and repeat on the other side.

Modification (B)

- Side plank is challenging. To make it easier, from




Plank, press your left hand into the floor, roll onto the outside edge of your left foot and bring your left knee down onto the floor (B). Then continue with the pose, keeping your body lifted and strong with your core engaged.

- Take 5 to 10 breaths, then return to Plank and repeat on the other side. You can build up from here.

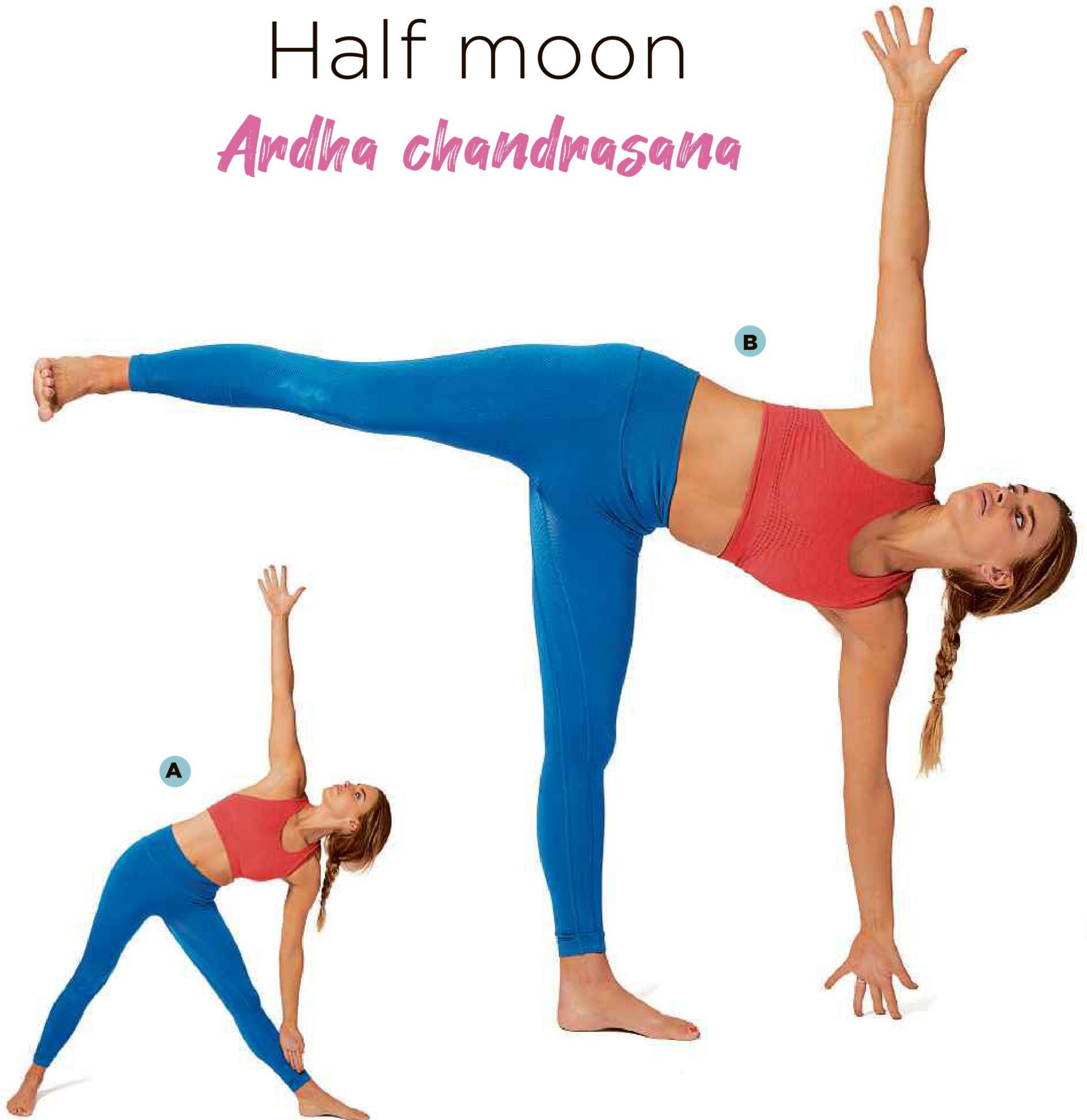
B

A

-  **Benefits**
- ⇒ Strengthens your core
 - ⇒ Tones your outer thighs
 - ⇒ Works your heart

Half moon

Ardha chandrasana



■ Start in Triangle (p52) (A). Take a few breaths to ground yourself. Inhale and extend your right arm to the ceiling, bend your left leg and slide your right foot towards your left.

■ Raise your right leg behind you, parallel to the floor. If needed, rest your right arm on your hip to help you balance.

■ Keeping your foot flexed and facing forwards, bring

your left hand down to rest on the floor. If it feels comfortable for your neck, turn your head to look upwards (B).

■ Engage your core and right thigh to help you

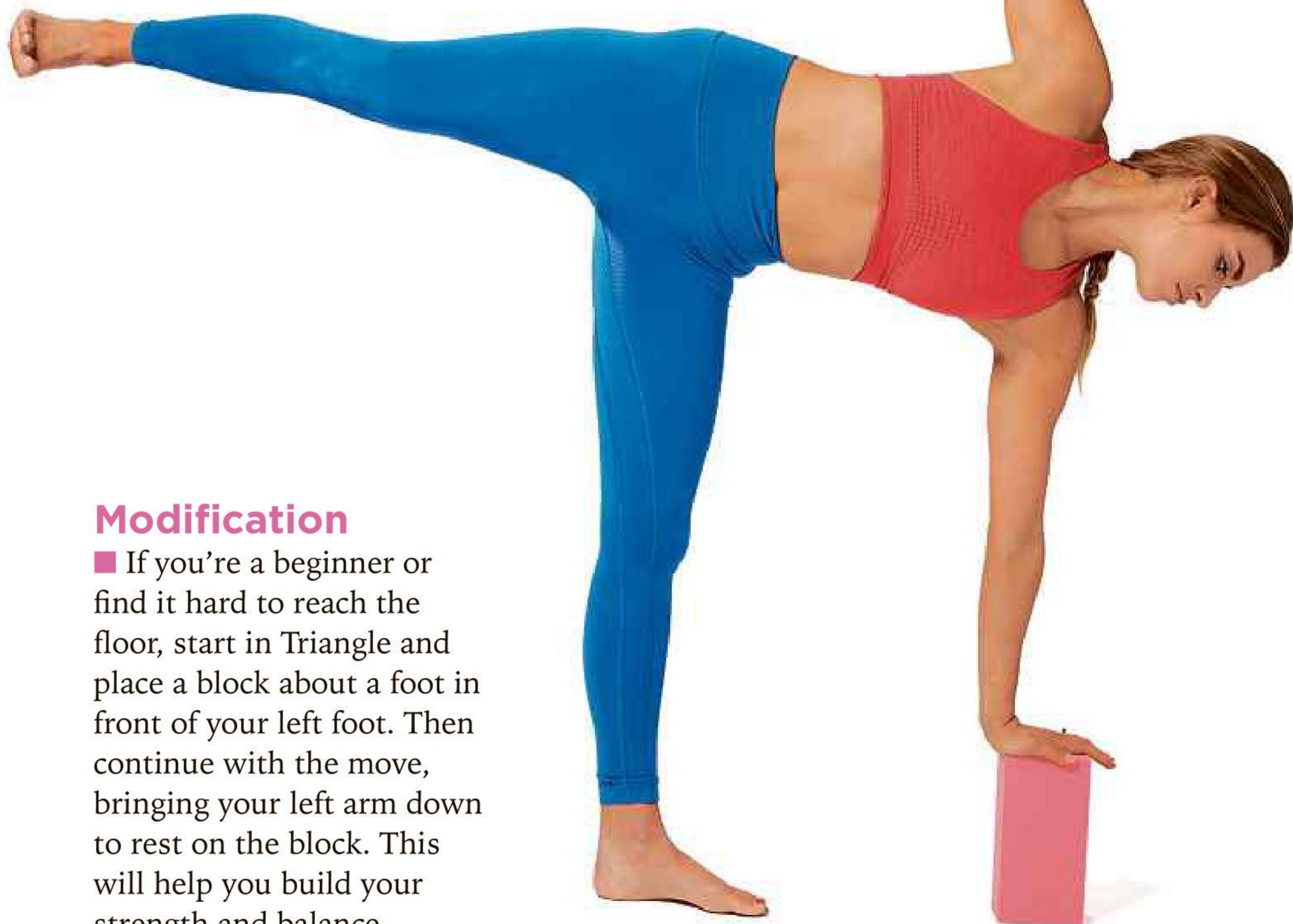
balance. Hold the pose for five breaths.

■ To release, bend your left leg slightly and lower your right leg back to the floor.

■ Rest, then repeat on the other side.

Tip

Beginners, you can
practise this pose
against a wall until your
balance improves.



Modification

■ If you're a beginner or find it hard to reach the floor, start in Triangle and place a block about a foot in front of your left foot. Then continue with the move, bringing your left arm down to rest on the block. This will help you build your strength and balance.



Modification

■ If you have problems with your neck or suffer from high blood pressure or dizziness, keep your gaze down when in the full pose.



Benefits

- ⇒ Improves your balance
- ⇒ Strengthens your body
- ⇒ Stretches your chest

Eagle pose

Garudasana

- Begin in Mountain pose (p40) with your feet together and arms out to the sides, palms facing forwards (A).
- Root down through your feet and breathe evenly.
- When you feel grounded, shift your weight onto your left foot, bend your left knee and place your right thigh over your left thigh. Then wrap your right shin behind your left calf, pointing your toes down.
- Press your left foot into the ground and gaze at a fixed spot ahead of you, to help you balance.
- Inhale and stretch your arms out in front of you. Exhale and cross your arms

with your left elbow on top of your right so your left arm is on top. Then wrap your right forearm around your left to bring your palms together.

- Bring your forearms to vertical, draw your shoulder blades down your back and feel the stretch across your upper arms and back (B).

■ Take several deep breaths. On each inhalation, lift your elbows up a little further. On each exhalation, lower your bottom a bit further. Breathe into your belly to stay balanced.

- On an exhale, uncurl your body and return to Mountain pose. Relax and repeat on the other side.



Tip

Start by practising with just your arms, then your legs, and finally put both parts together.



B



**SIDE
VIEW**



Benefits

- ⇒ Stretches and strengthens your body
- ⇒ Improves your balance
- ⇒ Boosts circulation to your joints

Extended hand to toe pose

Utthita hasta padangusthasana

■ From Mountain pose (p40) (A), transfer your weight into your left foot, spreading your toes and rooting into the floor through the base of your big and little toes. Lift your inner arch. Slowly bring your right knee in towards your belly. Reach down with your right hand and take hold of your right big toe with your fingers. Place your left hand on your left hip.

■ Engage your core, lift up through your crown and relax your shoulders down. When you feel ready, inhale and extend your right leg forwards, straightening your knee as much as possible (B).

■ It's essential to keep your spine straight so, beginners, keep the knee of your left leg bent if needed. Over time, as your balance and flexibility improves, you'll be able to straighten it. If you find it hard to balance, you can also bring your right knee into your body

and hold it there with your hand.

■ If you feel balanced with your right leg extended, slowly swing your leg out to the side (C). Breathe steadily to help you balance. Don't worry if your leg is bent, this will improve with practice.

■ Take a few deep breaths here, extending through your right arm and leg, resisting your foot with your fingers.

■ If you feel balanced here, bring your right leg back round to the front. Breathe into your belly, engage your core, firm your thigh muscles and let go of your right foot, holding your leg in place. Extend out through your leg and up through your torso.

■ Exhale and lower your hands and foot back down.

■ Alternatively, to come out of the pose at stage (B), exhale and gently lower your foot and hands from here.

■ Pause, then repeat on the other side.



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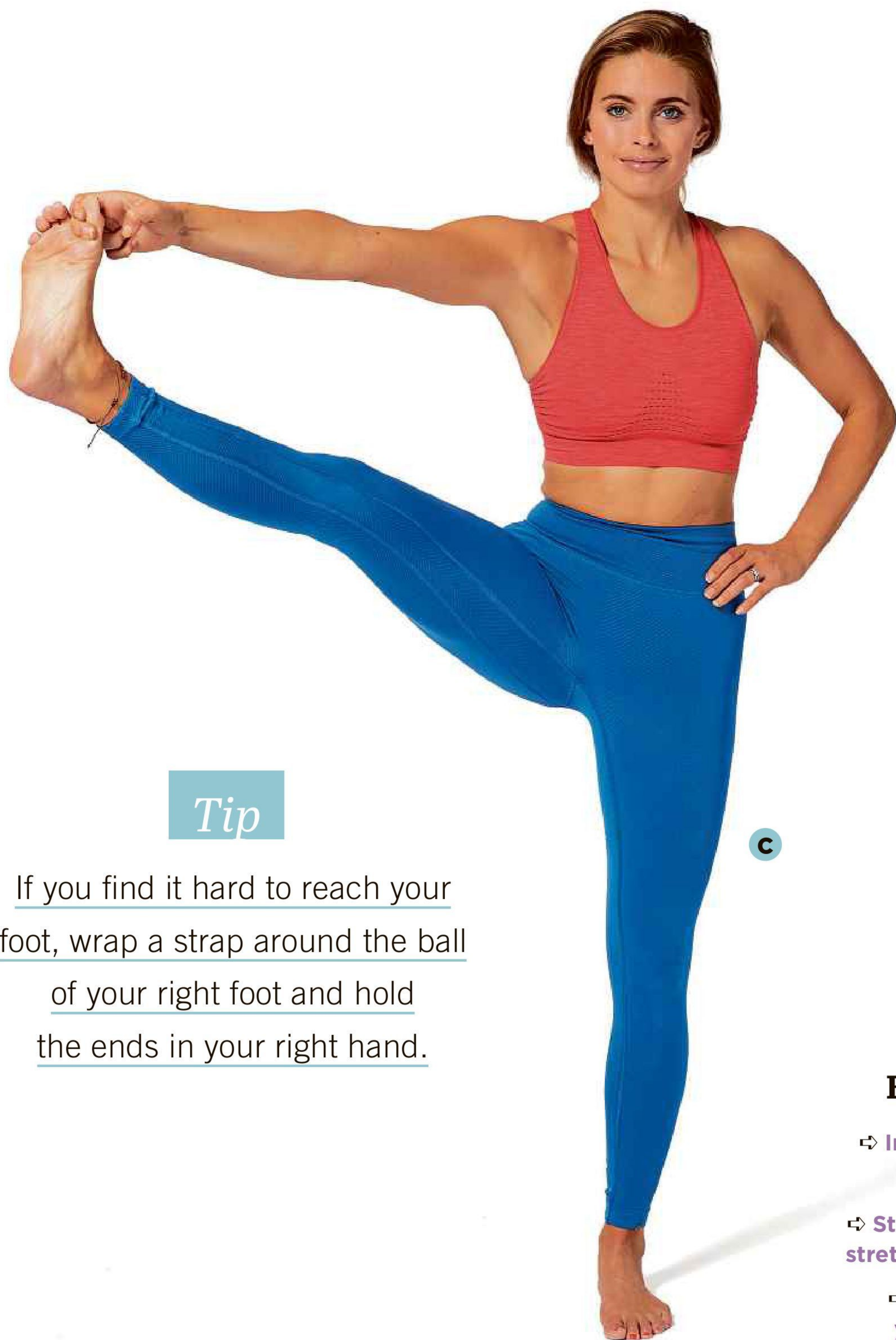
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Tip

If you find it hard to reach your foot, wrap a strap around the ball of your right foot and hold the ends in your right hand.



Benefits

- ⇒ Improves your balance
- ⇒ Strengthens and stretches your legs
- ⇒ Improves your focus

Lord of the dance pose

Natarajasana

■ Start in Mountain pose (p40) with your feet together and transfer your weight onto your left leg. Spread your toes and ground through the base of your big and little toes. Keeping a slight bend in your left knee, bend your right heel towards your right buttock.

■ Keeping your torso upright, reach back with your right hand to hold the inside of your right foot. Stretch your left arm up towards the ceiling (A).

■ Rooting through your left foot to stabilise yourself, inhale and extend your right foot further up and away from your buttock. Tilt your pelvis towards your navel, press your tailbone

towards the floor, engage your core and lift your chest. Draw your shoulder blades down your spine as you lengthen the back of your neck (B).

■ On an inhale, lift your right foot further up and back, away from the floor and your torso. Extend through your right thigh behind you, keeping it parallel to the floor. Stretch your left arm forwards, taking it as parallel to the floor as you can. Gaze beyond your left fingertips and take five breaths into your belly (C).

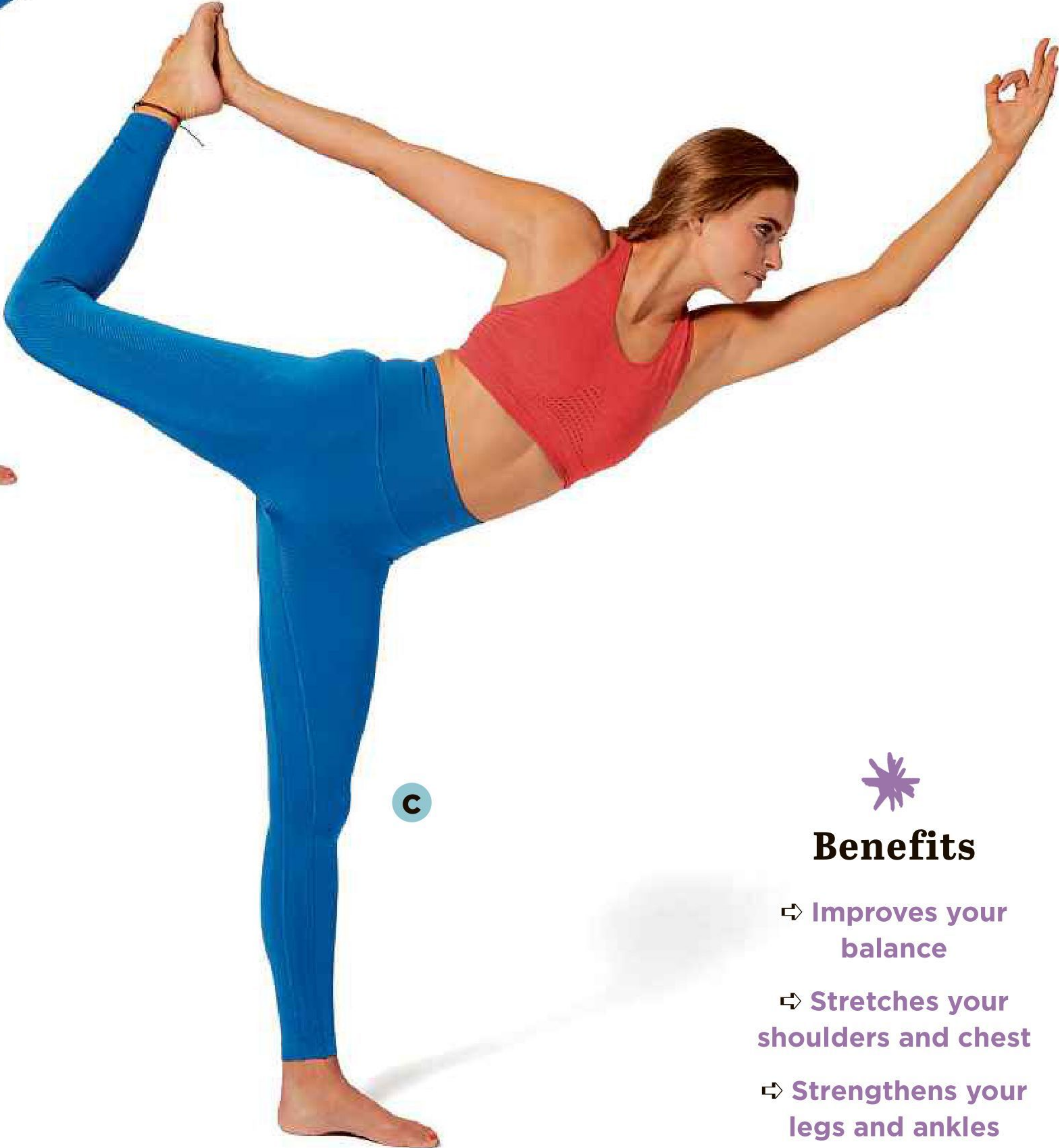
■ To come out of the pose, exhale and slowly release your right foot back down to the floor.

■ Repeat on the other side.

Tip

Focus on a point in front of you to help you maintain your balance.





Benefits

- ⇒ Improves your balance
- ⇒ Stretches your shoulders and chest
- ⇒ Strengthens your legs and ankles

Standing forward fold

Uttanasana



■ From Mountain pose (p40), take your hands to your hips. Inhale and ground through your feet as you lengthen your torso. Exhale and gently fold forwards from your hips with a flat back. When your spine is parallel to the floor, let your pelvis come into neutral.

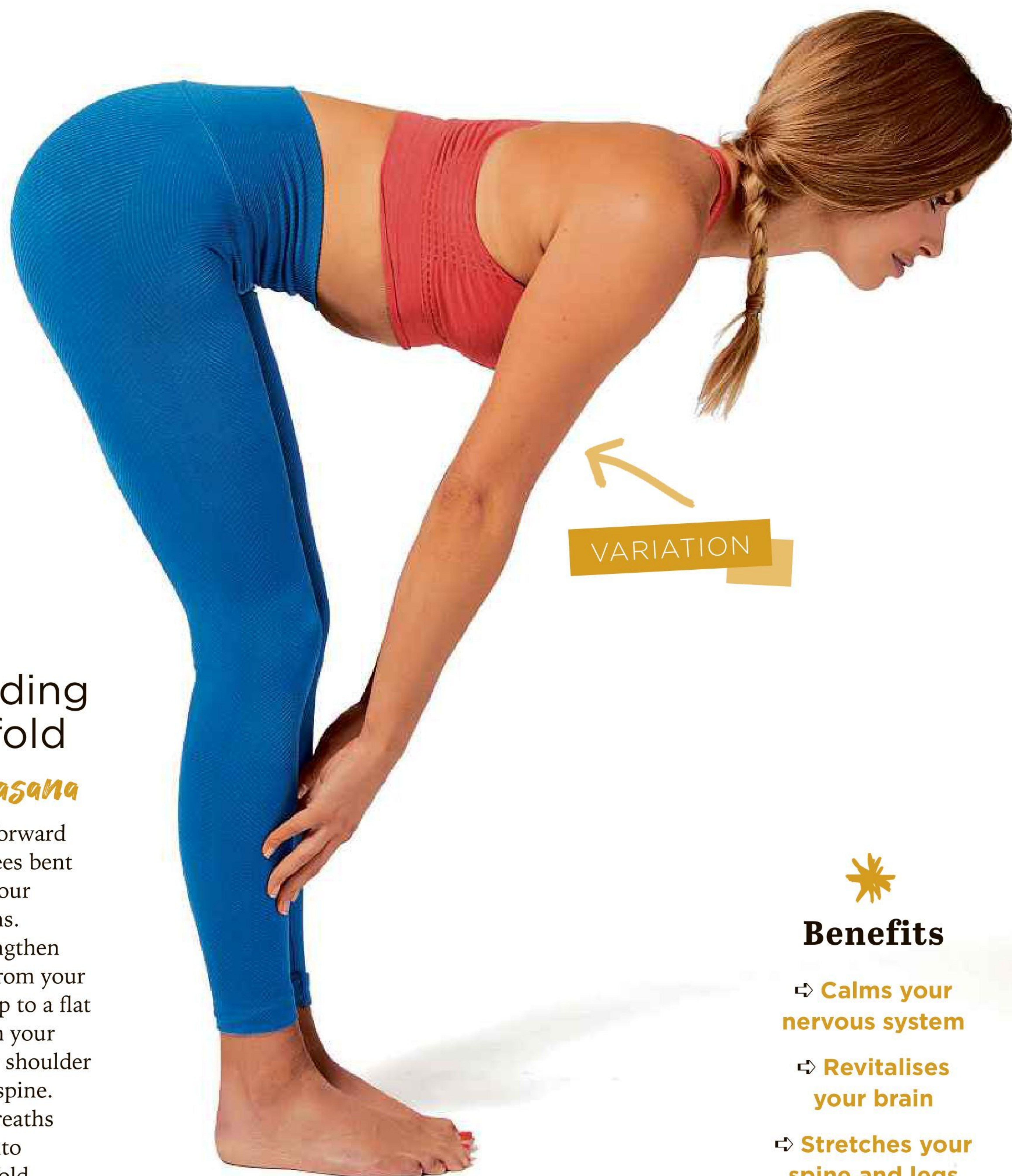
■ With a slight bend in your knees, inhale to lengthen your spine then, as you exhale, continue folding and bring your chest down to rest on your thighs or as far as it will comfortably go. Release your arms and rest your hands on your shins, ankles or on the floor.

■ Keeping a microbend in your knees, let your upper body relax fully, then take your tailbone towards the ceiling and allow your head to release closer to the floor.

■ On each in-breath, feel your spine lengthening; on each out-breath, fold a little deeper. Let go of any tension, breathing evenly for several breaths, then inhale to gently uncurl your spine to return to standing.

Tip

To deepen the stretch, fold your arms and allow the weight of your upper body to draw your head closer to the floor.



Half-standing forward fold

Ardha Uttanasana

- From Standing forward fold, with your knees bent or straight, place your hands on your shins.
- Inhale as you lengthen your crown away from your tailbone to come up to a flat back. Root through your feet and draw your shoulder blades down your spine.
- Take five deep breaths and release back into Standing forward fold.



Benefits

- ⇨ Calms your nervous system
- ⇨ Revitalises your brain
- ⇨ Stretches your spine and legs

Wide-legged forward bend

Prasarita padottanasana

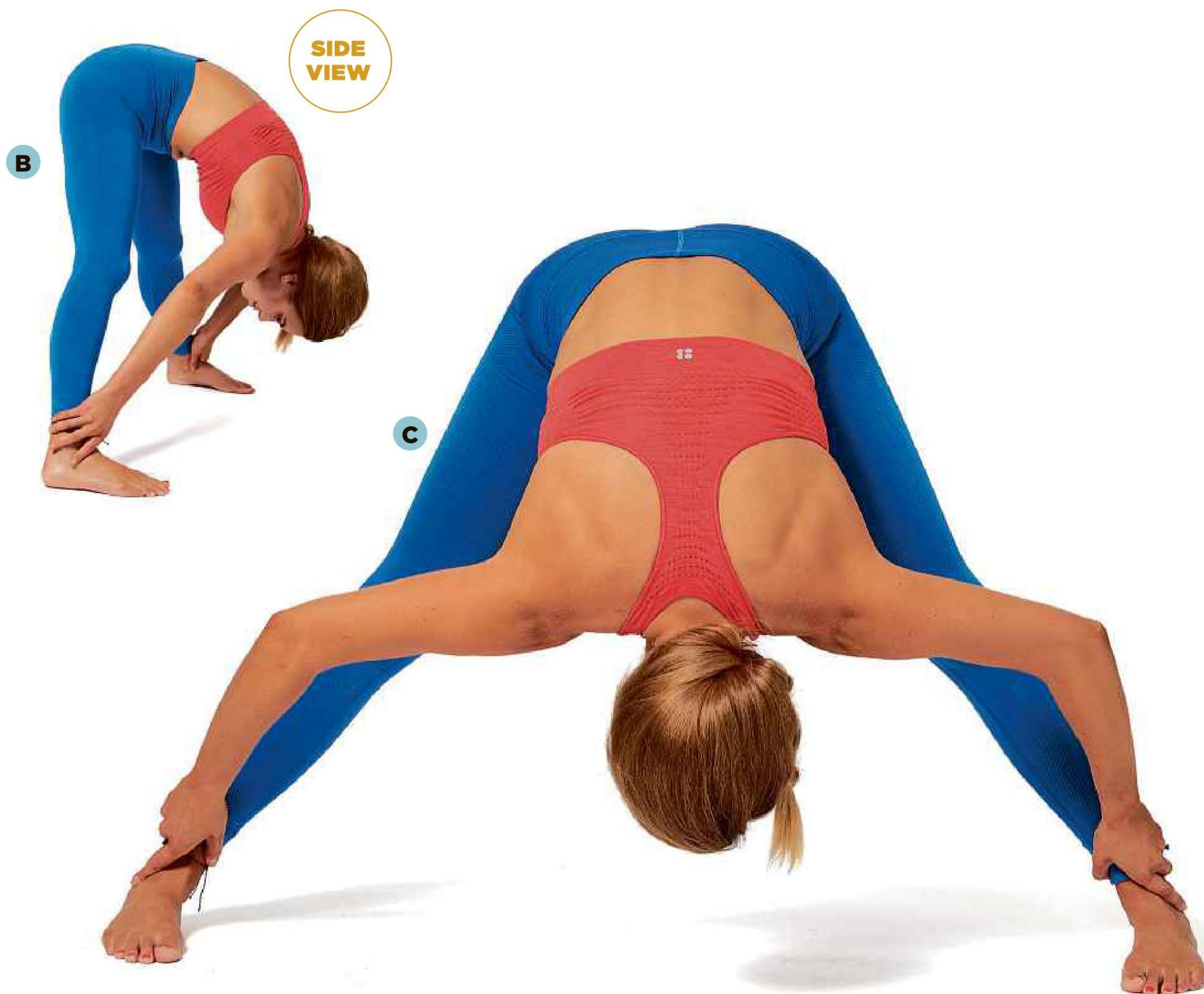


Tip

If you find it hard to reach the ground, rest your hands on blocks until your flexibility increases.

■ From Mountain pose (p40) (A), step your feet wide, keeping the inner edges parallel. Spread your toes, lift the inner arches and root through the outer edges of your feet.

■ Inhale and take your arms overhead, extending through your hands and lengthening your spine out of your waist, keeping your shoulders down.
■ On an exhale, fold forwards from your hips



Benefits

- ⇒ **Calms your mind**
- ⇒ **Strengthens and stretches your hamstrings and inner legs**
- ⇒ **Relieves mild backache**

keeping your back flat. When your spine is parallel to the floor, bring your hands down to the mat, shoulder-width apart, fingers forwards.
■ On each inhale lengthen your spine, on each

exhale fold a little deeper, lowering your head towards the floor, letting your neck go soft (B).
■ Draw up your kneecaps and engage your thighs, releasing your upper body downwards and

draw your shoulders away from your neck (C).
■ Stay in the pose up to one minute, breathing evenly, then place your hands on your hips and inhale, slowly returning to standing.

Bridge

Setu bandha



■ Lie on your back with your knees bent. Place your feet hip-distance apart and parallel to each other, directly beneath your knees. Rest your arms by your sides, palms facing in (A).
■ Inhale, ground through your feet and, on an exhale, tilt your tailbone up and

slowly peel your spine off the floor, vertebra by vertebra until your weight is resting on your shoulders.
■ Keep your thighs parallel, knees hip-distance apart, and root through your feet to lift your chest. Roll your shoulders

up, back and down.
■ Reach your hands under your body, clasp your fingers together and draw your shoulders together (B).
■ Take five deep breaths into your belly.
■ To release, exhale and slowly roll down your spine to rest on the floor.



Benefits

- ⇒ **Revitalises your brain**
- ⇒ **Stretches your core and back**
- ⇒ **Firms your inner thighs**

Tip

To help engage your thigh muscles and keep them parallel, place a yoga brick between them.



Modification

■ To turn Bridge into a Restorative pose, slide a yoga block under your sacrum once your hips are lifted off the floor. Keep your arms relaxed by your sides. Rest here for up to a few minutes. This allows your spine to safely stretch while fully supported.



Benefits

- ⇒ **Relieves back pain**
- ⇒ **Release your muscles following a strenuous yoga session**
- ⇒ **Restores your body and mind**

Shoulderstand

Salamba sarvangasana

■ Lie on your back with your knees bent, feet flat on the floor and your arms at your sides (A).

■ Bring your knees over your chest then exhale and press through your elbows, lift your buttocks towards the ceiling and your knees towards your head. Rest your hands on your back to support your spine.

■ Draw your shoulder blades together and bring your elbows close to your body. Exhale and take your hips over your shoulders, slowly raising your feet towards the ceiling. Lengthen your legs upwards (B).

■ Draw your shoulder blades down your spine and lift your sternum to vertical.

■ Draw your belly button to your spine to help keep your torso lifted.

■ Stay in the pose for 10–20 breaths to a few minutes, breathing slowly and evenly.

■ To come out, bend your knees in to your chest, release your arms, exhale and uncurl your spine down to the floor, one vertebra at a time. Rest in Savasana (p102). Or, come down into Plough (p77).



Tip

Try staying in the pose for an extra second each time you practise until you can hold the pose for a few minutes.



Benefits

- ⇒ **Revitalises your brain**
- ⇒ **Stretches your shoulders and back**
- ⇒ **Strengthens your immune system**



Plough *Halasana*

■ From Shoulderstand, keeping your hands on the small of your back, exhale and gently bring your legs down over your head until your toes rest on the floor or a block behind you (A). Beginners can bring their legs down to rest on a wall.

■ Slightly round your torso and keep your knees bent.

Gaze towards your thighs, to protect your neck from any damage.

■ If comfortable here, lift your hips to bring them directly above your shoulders, draw your hands down your spine to support your upper back and extend your heels away to straighten your legs.

■ Now clasp your hands

together behind your back or hold your toes, draw your shoulders together, and press your arms into the mat (B).

■ Take 10-20 breaths in Plough, then exhale to release the pose, bending your knees and rolling back down to lying position, one vertebra at a time.

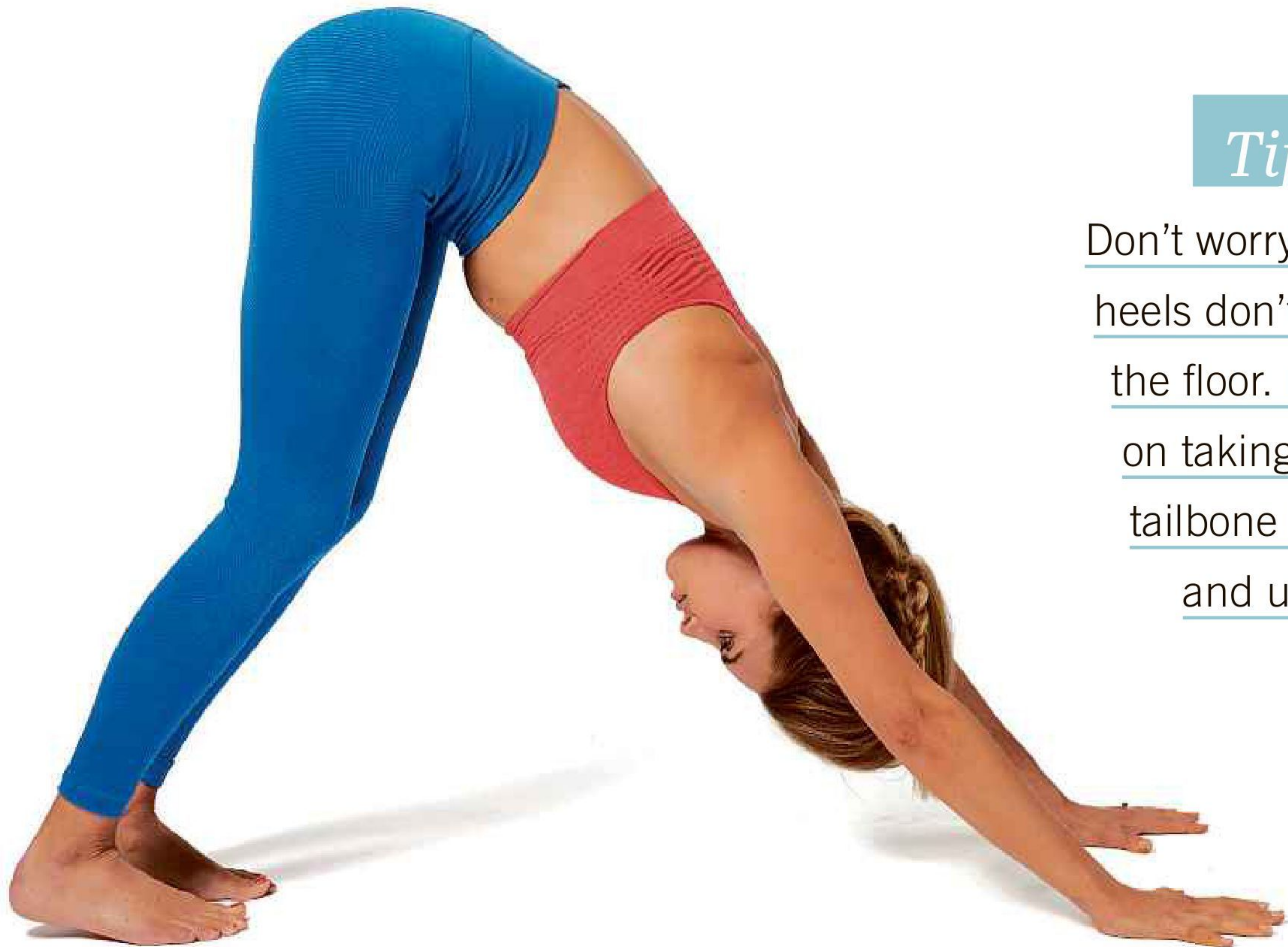


Benefits

- ⇒ Stretches your spine
- ⇒ Reduces stress and fatigue
- ⇒ Eases backache

Downward-facing dog

Adho mukha svanasana



Tip

Don't worry if your heels don't touch the floor. Focus on taking your tailbone back and up.

■ Start on all-fours with your knees beneath your hips. Place your hands a palm's length in front of your shoulders, shoulder-width apart, fingers spread.
■ Root through the palms of your hands, tuck under your toes and raise your knees off the mat, taking your tailbone back and up

to lengthen your spine.

■ Keeping your knees bent, root through your hands to extend your spine. Rotate your upper arms outwards and draw your shoulder blades down your spine. Lower your front ribs towards your thighs and release your neck.

■ Gently draw one heel and

then the other towards the mat, stretching out your hamstrings in a walking motion, then lower both heels towards the mat.

■ Check your weight is even through each foot and your inner arches are lifted. Take five deep breaths then exhale and lower into Child's pose (p94).



Benefits

⇒ **Tones your arms**

⇒ **Strengthens your wrists**

⇒ **Strengthens and stretches your shoulders and legs**



3-legged downward dog

Tri pada adho mukha svanasana

- From Downward-facing dog, root your left foot into the floor and, inhaling, extend your right foot up to the sky.
- Keep your hips square and your toes active. Slide

- your shoulder blades down your back, extend the crown of your head down towards the mat and your right foot back and up (A).
- Exhale to return. Then repeat on the other side (B).



Benefits

- ⇒ Improves your balance
- ⇒ Tones your standing leg
- ⇒ Opens your hips

Cobra

Bhujangasana



■ Lie on your stomach, with your legs and ankles straight and your feet hip-distance apart. Rest your forehead on the floor and place your hands beneath your shoulders, palms down and fingers spread (A).
■ Root through your hands.

Bring your elbows in and draw your shoulders back and down to create space at the base of your neck.

■ Draw your navel to your spine, root through your pubic bone and inhale, pressing through your hands to raise your head

and shoulders, leading with the back of your neck. Exhale (B).

■ On each inhale, lengthen your spine, raising your head to gaze forwards. On each exhale, draw your shoulders down. Extend the crown of your head to

the ceiling. Keep your legs strong by lifting your inner thigh muscles.

■ Stay in the pose for five to 10 breaths. Then, slowly exhale and lower your body to the floor, one vertebra at a time. Rest your head on one side.

Tip

To check you're not straining your back in Cobra, take your hands off the floor for a moment and see if you can maintain the lift comfortably.



Upward-facing dog

Urdhva mukha svastana

- Lie on your stomach with your legs and ankles straight and feet hip-distance apart.
- Bend your elbows and place your palms on the floor beside your waist with your forearms perpendicular to the floor.
- Press your hands into the floor and slightly back, then inhale, straighten your arms and lift your torso up and bring your legs a few inches off the floor.
- Firm your thighs and rotate your arms slightly outwards so your inner elbows face forwards.
- Firm your buttocks, draw your shoulder blades down your back and lift through your upper chest.
- Stay here for 15 seconds, breathing evenly.



Benefits

- ⇒ **Strengthens your spine**
- ⇒ **Opens your lungs**
- ⇒ **Firms your buttocks**

Camel

Ustrasana



■ Begin in kneeling position with your thighs hip-width apart, and the tops of your feet flat on the floor. Root your shins and tops of your feet into the floor and draw your sitting bones upwards.

■ Rest your hands on your lower back, with the base of your palms on the top of your buttocks. Draw your tailbone forwards and press the front of your thighs back. Draw your shoulders

down your back to lift your torso (A).

■ Keeping your tailbone firm, lean back and drop your right hand down to your right heel.

■ Once you feel stable, inhale and raise your left arm up over your head. If your neck feels comfortable, you can take your head back and look up to your hand (B).

■ Stay here for a few breaths.

■ Once you're ready to come back up, bring your hands to your hips, inhale and gently lift your head and torso up by pushing your hips to towards the floor and leading with your chest.

■ Repeat on the other side.

■ Now for the full pose. Drop your right hand to your right heel and your left hand to your left heel.

■ Exhale, lifting and opening your chest and

shoulders. Draw your tailbone under and your pubic bone upwards. If your neck feels comfortable, take your head back and look up (C).

■ Take a few breaths here.

To come out of the pose, bring your hands to your hips, inhale and gently lift your head and torso up by pushing your hips towards the floor and leading with your chest.

■ Rest in Child's pose (p94).

Tip

If you are a beginner, keep your neck long, chin tucked in and look forwards.



Modification

■ If you struggle to reach your hands to your heels or find full Camel pose too strenuous, try keeping your toes tucked under. This will elevate your heels, making the pose easier. Then follow the full instructions for the pose.



Benefits

- ⇒ **Strengthens your back**
- ⇒ **Improves your posture**
- ⇒ **Stretches your chest, core and hips**

Foot opening with shoulder stretch



- Start by kneeling on the floor with your legs together, feet apart and toes tucked under so your weight is on the balls of your feet (A).
- Spread your toes out and sit on your heels. If this is painful, keep your weight forwards on your hands and lift your hips slightly (B).
- If you can sit your hips back onto your heels,

take your hands back behind you, directly under your shoulders, fingers facing forwards, palms flat on the floor if you can. Look ahead.

- Inhale, push your chest to the sky and press your knees together, feeling the stretch in your feet, thighs, spine and shoulders (C).
- If this is too painful, simply take your hands in front of your feet and lift

Tip

Avoid this pose if
you have arthritis,
knee pain
or bunions.



Benefits

⇒ **Stretches and improves flexibility in your feet**

⇒ **Opens your spine and stretches your shoulders, thighs and core**

⇒ **Tones the front of your neck, chin and jowls and stretches the back of your neck**

your hips until you feel a gentle stretch. Your feet will open gradually.

■ Build up to staying in this pose for 30 seconds. For the last 10 seconds of the pose, exhale and press your chin into your throat, to make a triple chin, then inhale and slowly take your head back, keeping the back of your neck long and straight.

■ Keep your neck in line

with your spine so you look up at the ceiling and lengthen the back of your neck, pulling your chin towards your throat to bring traction and movement to your neck vertebrae.

■ When you are ready to release, exhale and, leading with your chest, slowly bring your body back to kneeling. Lie down on your front to rest.

Locust variations

Salabhasana variations



Gondola

■ Lie on your stomach on the floor with your arms by your sides, your chin on the floor (A).
■ Look forwards. Interlace your hands behind your back with your palms facing each other. If your hands don't reach, hold your elbows behind your back, or grab a strap.

■ Keep your legs together, your knees locked and toes pointed. If you have back problems, keep your legs hip-width apart.
■ Inhale and lift up your legs, chest, head and arms.
■ Lock your elbows and knees. Squeeze your legs together and point your toes. Keep

your neck long and comfortable, stretching your front neck muscles (B).
■ Inhale and come up higher. Lift your body and lock your knees and elbows.
■ Exhale and slowly release back down to the floor. Place your head to the left side and rest.

Tip

If you have a shoulder injury, keep your arms on the floor by your sides, palms down.



Reaching locust

- Lie on your stomach with your forehead resting on the floor.
- Stretch your arms straight out in front of you, parallel with your little fingers resting on the floor, as if you were holding a box. The inside of your arms should be touching your ears.
- Engage your core and legs and, on an inhale, lift up your legs and arms.
- Hold for 10 seconds, then exhale back down to the ground, rest your head to one side and breathe.
- If you have a shoulder

injury, instead of doing the full move you can place your forehead on your hands (one hand on top of the other) with your elbows out to the side and lift. If you have back pain, just tense your muscles and don't actually lift.



Benefits

- ⇒ **Tones your arms and legs**
- ⇒ **Strengthens your lower back, glutes and core**
- ⇒ **Relieves stress**

Boat pose

Paripurna navasana



■ Sit on the floor with your legs straight out in front of you.

■ Inhale and bend your knees, raise your feet off the floor and grasp the back of your thighs.

Engage your core and lean back to balance on your sitting bones.

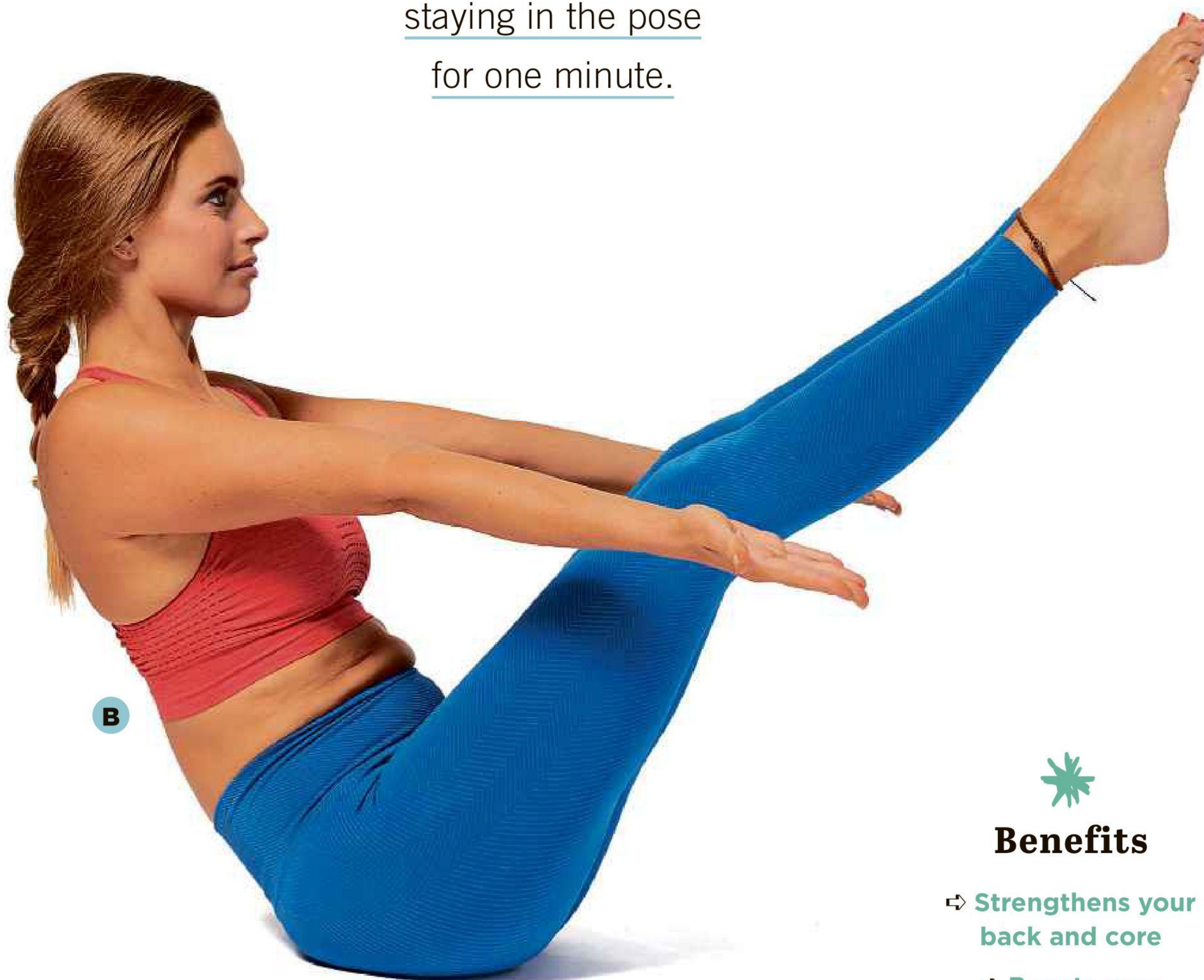
■ If you feel stable here, raise your shins until they are parallel to the floor (A).

■ Then extend your arms so they are also parallel to the floor.

■ Exhale and, holding the back of your thighs, straighten your legs in front of you that so your

Tip

Gradually build up to staying in the pose for one minute.



Benefits

- ⇒ Strengthens your back and core
- ⇒ Boosts your cardio fitness
- ⇒ Relieves stress

torso and legs create a V shape. Point your toes, draw your shoulder blades down your spine and keep your abdominals engaged.

■ If you feel comfortable to

do so, let go of your thighs and hold your arms parallel to the floor (B).

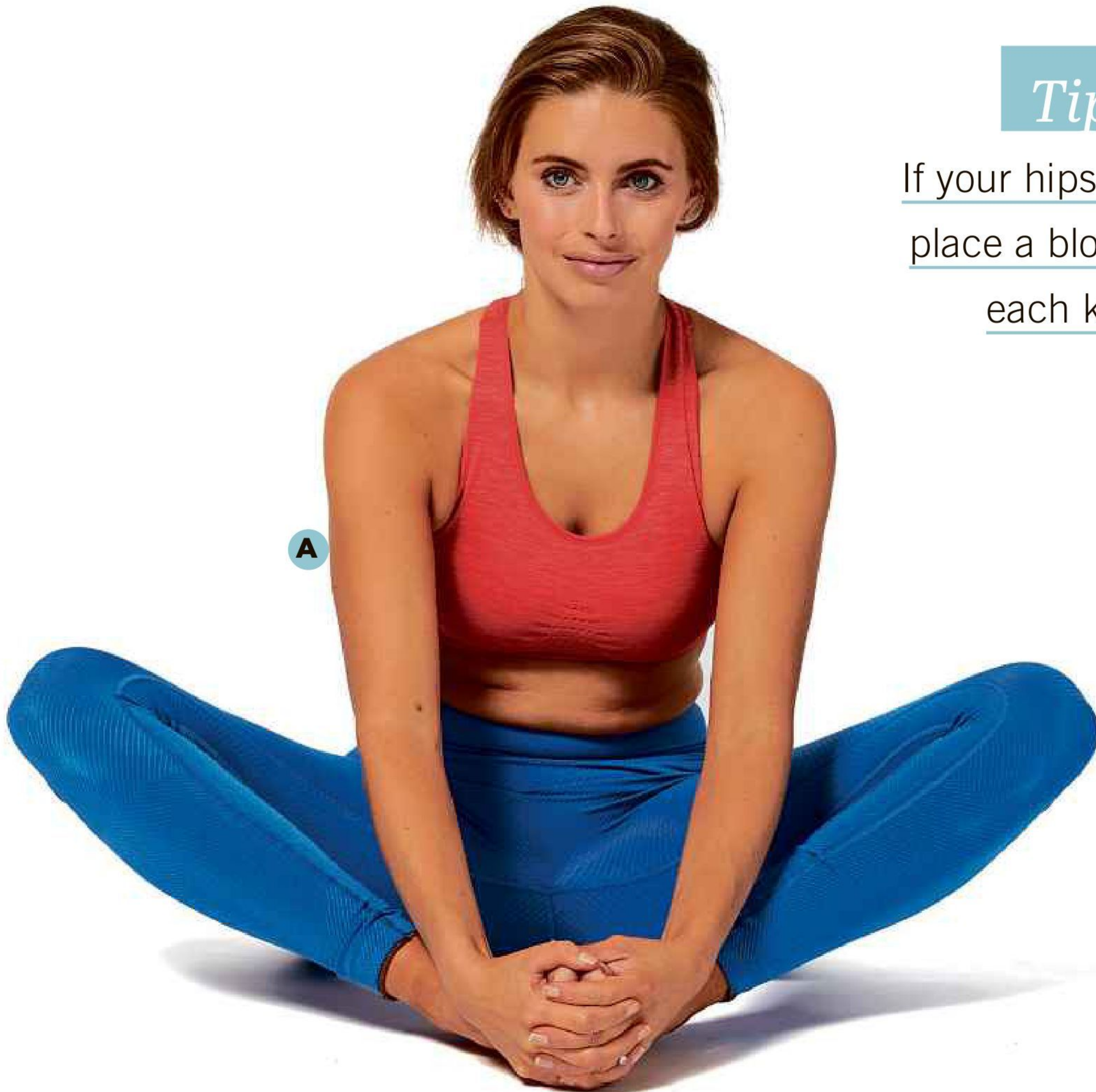
■ Take five breaths and release back down to the ground. Repeat this up to five times.

Cobbler

Baddha konasana

Tip

If your hips are tight, place a block under each knee.



■ Sit on the floor with your weight spread between your sitting bones. If your hips are tight, sit on a folded blanket to raise your pelvis.
■ Exhale, bend your knees, pull your heels towards your

pelvis and then drop your knees out to the sides and press the soles of your feet together.

■ Gently clasp your fingers around your toes, keeping the outer edges of your feet

pressed into the floor. Slide your shoulder blades down your back to lengthen the front of your torso. Release your thigh bones towards the floor so your knees follow. You can stay

here for a few minutes, feeling the gentle stretch.

■ Slide your feet forwards a little to make a diamond shape with your legs (A).

■ Continue to hold your feet, let your elbows fall



Benefits

- ⇒ Stimulates your circulation and heart
- ⇒ Stretches your hips and knees
- ⇒ Relaxes your spine

out to the sides and bend forwards from your hips, bringing your weight onto the front of your sitting bones as your spine relaxes forwards.

■ Release your neck and

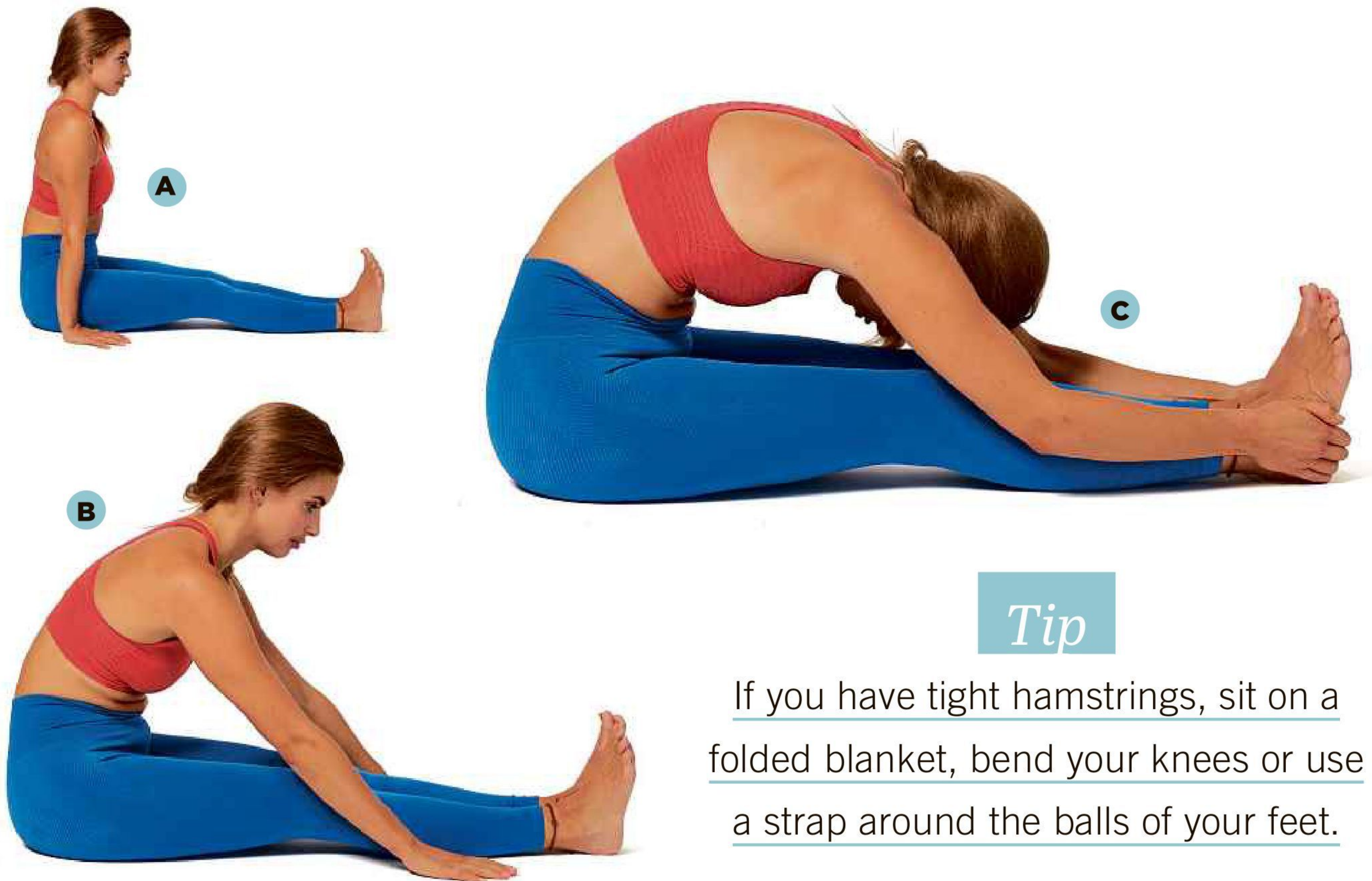
let your forehead drop towards your hands. Rest for a few breaths then, as your muscles release, exhale and sink a little deeper into the pose (B).

■ Spend anything from one

to five minutes in the pose. Then inhale and engage your core to come back up to sitting. Slowly stretch your legs in front of you and lean back on your hands gently to counter the pose.

Seated forward fold

Paschimottanasana



Tip

If you have tight hamstrings, sit on a folded blanket, bend your knees or use a strap around the balls of your feet.

■ Sit with your legs straight out in front of you, feet together, ankles flexed and toes pointing to the ceiling. Extend through the balls of your feet (A).

■ Inhale and take your arms overhead. Exhale, draw your shoulder blades down your back and your arms into your shoulder sockets. Root down through your sitting bones and lengthen your spine up out of your pelvis.

■ As you exhale, fold forwards slightly from your

hips, keeping your back flat. Pause, inhale and lengthen your spine then, leading from your chest, exhale and fold further forwards (B).

■ Continue slowly lengthening your spine as you reach your torso up and forwards to fold over your thighs. As you get lower, release your spine and take your hands either side of your shins or, if you can reach, clasp your hands behind your feet.

■ Draw your shoulders away

from your ears, and keep your neck long by extending through the crown of your head and drawing your chin to your chest (C).

■ Breathe deeply, feeling the deep stretch in the back of your legs and the release in your back as your breath massages your spine.

■ To come out of the pose, inhale and reach up with your crown and chest to return to sitting. Rest for a moment or two with your eyes closed.



Benefits

- ⇒ Relieves stress and anxiety
- ⇒ Eases high blood pressure and insomnia
- ⇒ Stretches your spine, shoulders and hamstrings



Head-to-knee forward bend

Janu sirsasana

- Sit with your legs out in front of you, feet together, ankles flexed and toes pointing to the ceiling.
- Inhale and bend your right knee, placing the sole of your foot to the inside of your left thigh.
- Inhale, lift your arms, keep your hips level and face forwards.
- Exhale and extend forwards from your hips,

- walking your finger tips in front of you (A).
- Inhale, lengthening your spine and drawing your shoulders down. Keep your neck long.
- Exhale and bend forwards, bringing your torso down over your left leg. Don't force it (B).
- Take five to 10 breaths here. Then release and repeat on the other side.



Benefits

- ⇒ Stretches your hamstrings and groin
- ⇒ Improves your digestion and stimulates your kidneys
- ⇒ Eases menopausal symptoms

Extended child's pose

Balasana



■ Start in a kneeling position. Draw your knees apart and bring your big toes together, heels wide apart. Sit back onto the soles of your feet. Rest your palms on your thighs.

■ Inhale and root into your sitting bones, lengthening your spine.

■ Exhale and slowly walk your hands forwards, slowly lowering your torso between your thighs.

■ Take your hands shoulder-width apart, palms facing down, fingers spread and middle fingers pointing forwards. Press your hands into the floor, keeping your elbows off the floor and slide your shoulder blades down your back.

■ Exhale and lower your head to rest your forehead on the floor. Gently close your eyes.

■ Breathe deeply into the back of your ribs. On each exhale, sink further into the mat. Stretch through to your fingertips and reach your tailbone back to your heels.

■ When you're ready to come out, exhale and use your hands to bring you up to a sitting position. Pause for a moment to absorb the benefits of the pose.



Benefits

- ⇒ Calms your mind and relieves stress
- ⇒ Restores your body and relieves fatigue
- ⇒ Stretches your hips, thighs and ankles

Tip

You can rest in this pose after practising more demanding poses or sequences.



Restorative child's pose

Salamba balanasana

■ Kneel with a bolster lengthwise between your thighs with your big toes together, heels apart. Take a couple of gentle breaths.

■ Exhale and slowly bend forwards to rest your chest over the bolster. Allow your tailbone to release towards your heels to lengthen your lower back.

■ Rest your head to one

side and drop your chin towards your chest.

■ Extend your arms forwards and rest them alongside the bolster or wrap your arms around the bolster, drawing your shoulders away from your ears.

■ Let your breathing settle, your jaw relax and your belly soften. Feel any

tension melting away.

■ Rest here for up to three minutes, turning your head to the other side half way through.

■ To come out of the pose, place your hands under your shoulders and press into the mat, inhaling and come back up to kneeling. Rest for a few breaths.

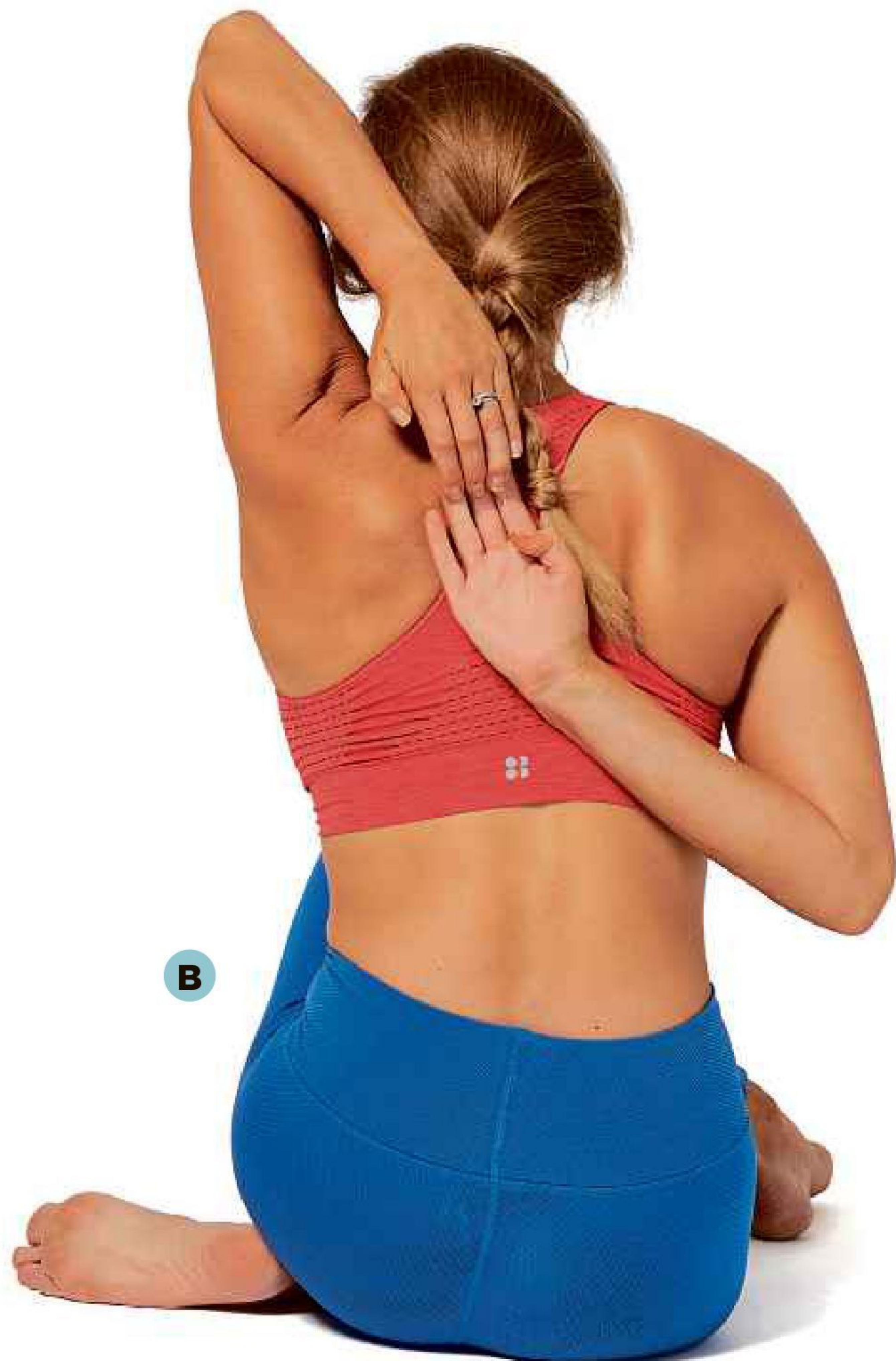
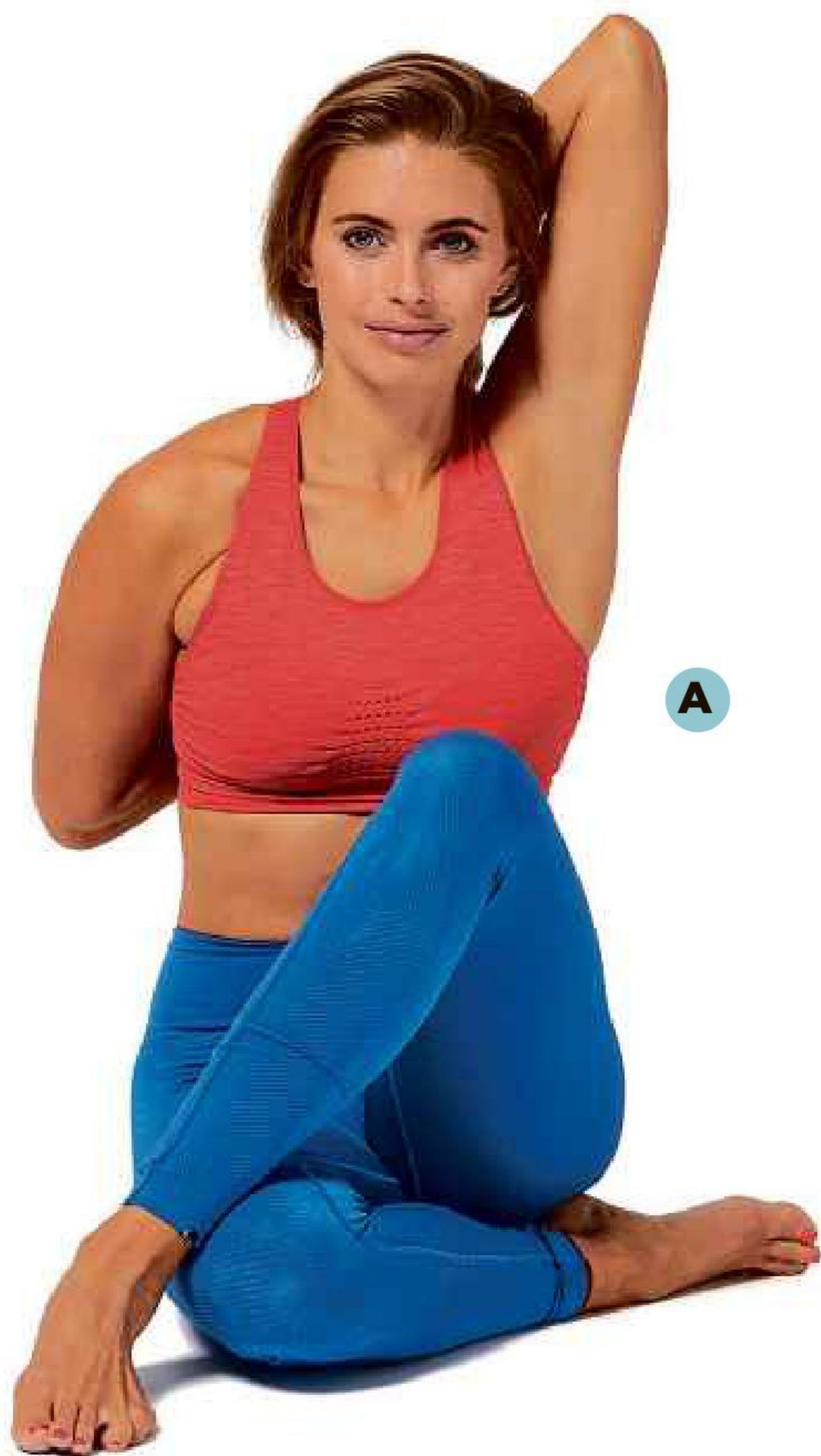


Benefits

- ⇒ Deeply relaxing
- ⇒ Calms your nervous system
- ⇒ Aids insomnia

Cow face pose

Gomukhasana



■ Begin by sitting with your legs in front of you, then bend your knees and put your feet on the floor.

■ Slide your right foot under your left knee to the outside of your left hip. Then cross your left leg over the right, stacking your left knee above the right and bringing your left

foot to the outside of your right hip (A).

■ Ensure your weight is evenly distributed on your sitting bones.

■ Inhale and stretch your left arm out to the side. Rotate your palm to face the ceiling, then continue raising your arm until your upper

arm is close to your ear.

■ As you exhale, fold your forearm to rest your palm on the centre of your upper back, elbow pointing up.

■ Inhale and raise your right arm out to the side. Turn your palm to face the back of the room, then bend your elbow and place the back of your hand between

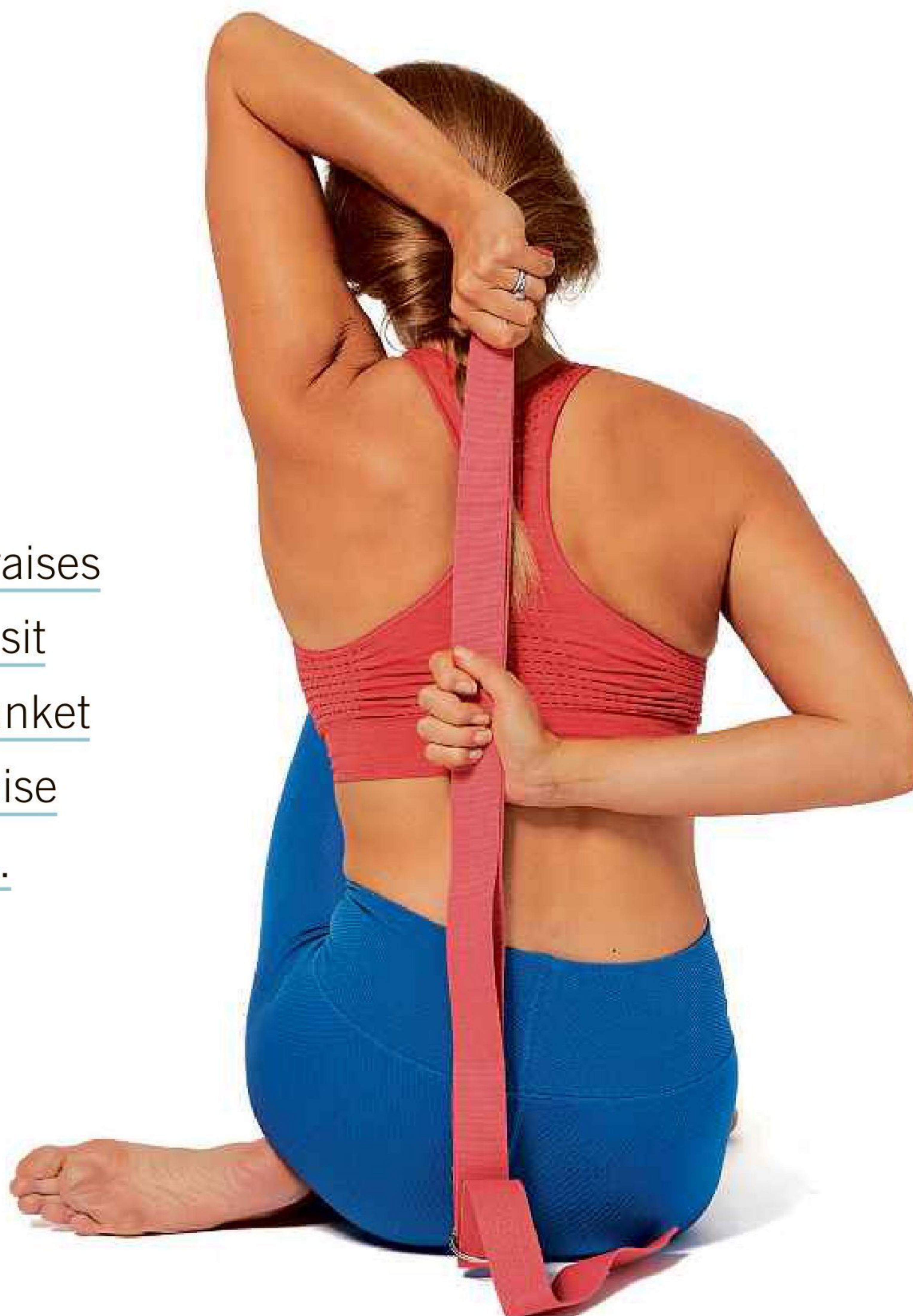
your shoulder blades, and take hold of the fingertips of your left hand (B).

■ Take three to five deep breaths into your belly, rooting through your sitting bones to keep your spine long and your chest open.

■ Release on an exhale and repeat on the other side.

Tip

If one buttock raises off the floor, sit on a folded blanket or block to raise your pelvis.



Modification

■ If your fingertips don't touch, take hold of a strap in your right hand before you move your arm into position. Let it drape down your back, then grasp the strap with your left hand.



Benefits

- ⇒ Stretches tight shoulders and chest
- ⇒ Opens your hips
- ⇒ Tones your jawline

Reclining hand-to-big toe sequence

Supta padangusthasana

Tip

On each exhale,
draw your foot closer
to your head.



■ Lie on your back. Bend your left knee and hug it in to your chest with your arms. Take five breaths here.
■ Inhale and straighten your leg, holding your big toe with your left

fingers (A). If you can't reach, hold your shin.
■ Keep your shoulders down and relaxed. Engage your right leg and rotate it inwards so your knee points up. Point your toes forwards.

Take five slow breaths.
■ Now rotate your left leg so that your toes point out to the left side (B).
■ Relax your shoulders away from your ears, keep your lower leg engaged

and your left hip down. Take five slow breaths.
■ Once you are ready, bring your left leg slowly back to the centre and release it to the floor.
■ Repeat on the other side.



Modification

■ If it's a strain to hold your big toe in your fingers and your lower back lifts off the floor, try using a strap wrapped round the ball of your foot (A) and (B).



Benefits

- ⇒ Stretches your hips, thighs and hamstrings
- ⇒ Relieves backache
- ⇒ Lowers high blood pressure

Reclining twist

Supta parivartanasana

Tip

On each exhale, consciously allow your body relax into the stretch.



- Lie on your back and take a few moments here, allowing your breath to settle and your heartbeat to slow down.
- Hug both knees to your chest, using your forearms to bring your knees in close,

- and draw your shoulder blades down your back (A).
- Take a few breaths here. Then extend your left leg to the floor, letting your left thigh release down into the mat.
- Rest your left hand on

your right knee and, as you exhale, guide it down to the left, towards the floor. Extend your right arm out to the side, palm facing upwards and, if comfortable, gently turn your head to

- look to the right (B).
- Breathe deeply, feeling the stretch down your right side. Take 10 breaths and then slowly inhale back to the centre.
- Repeat on the other side (C).



Tip

Finish by lying flat on your back in Savasana (p102) for a few minutes to absorb the benefits.

Stretch your waist!

For an alternative stretch, start with your knees bent and your feet on the floor, hip-width apart under your knees. Drop your knees to the right and your head to the left, relaxing your feet onto their sides. Repeat on the other side.



Benefits

- ⇒ Beats stress
- ⇒ Releases your spine and lower back
- ⇒ Improves your breathing

Corpse

Savasana



Tip

You can cover yourself with a blanket to stay warm during this pose.

■ Lie on the floor with your legs out in front of you, feet a little more than hip-distance apart.
■ Let your feet roll out to the sides and drop your lower back into the floor. Relax your arms down by your sides with your palms turned upwards (A). Gently close your eyes.

■ Breathe softly into your belly and, on each exhalation, let your body sink further into the floor, feeling any stress falling away.
■ Let your legs and arms go heavy, release your neck and shoulders and soften your jaw. Let your eyelids go heavy and feel your



eyes sink into your head.

■ Rest in the pose for five to 10 minutes, breathing gently and letting your mind relax.

■ Once you're ready, start to move your body, wriggling your fingers and toes and turning your head from side to side.

■ Slowly bring your arms

overhead, onto the floor behind you (B) and stretch your body from your feet to your fingertips.

■ Bring your knees to your chest and rock from side to side, to massage your back. Roll over to your right side and rest for a moment, then use your hands to help you come up to sitting.



Benefits

⇒ **Deeply relaxes your body and mind**

⇒ **Reduces stress and fatigue**

⇒ **Lowers blood pressure**



Stay-young sequences

Got the hang of the **postures**? Hopefully you're enjoying some of the magic yoga can bring, and feeling more stretched and limber. Now, you're ready to try some **yoga sequences**. These dynamic flows of postures are designed to exercise your body and mind. By selecting certain combinations of poses you can target **specific areas** of your body or therapeutic goals, from boosting cardiovascular fitness and **strengthening** your lower body to calming your mind and easing achy joints.

In this section, you'll find a collection of tailor-made sequences, all with **stay-young benefits**. Read the instructions and then practise each one slowly at first.

They'll soon become second nature. Enjoy!

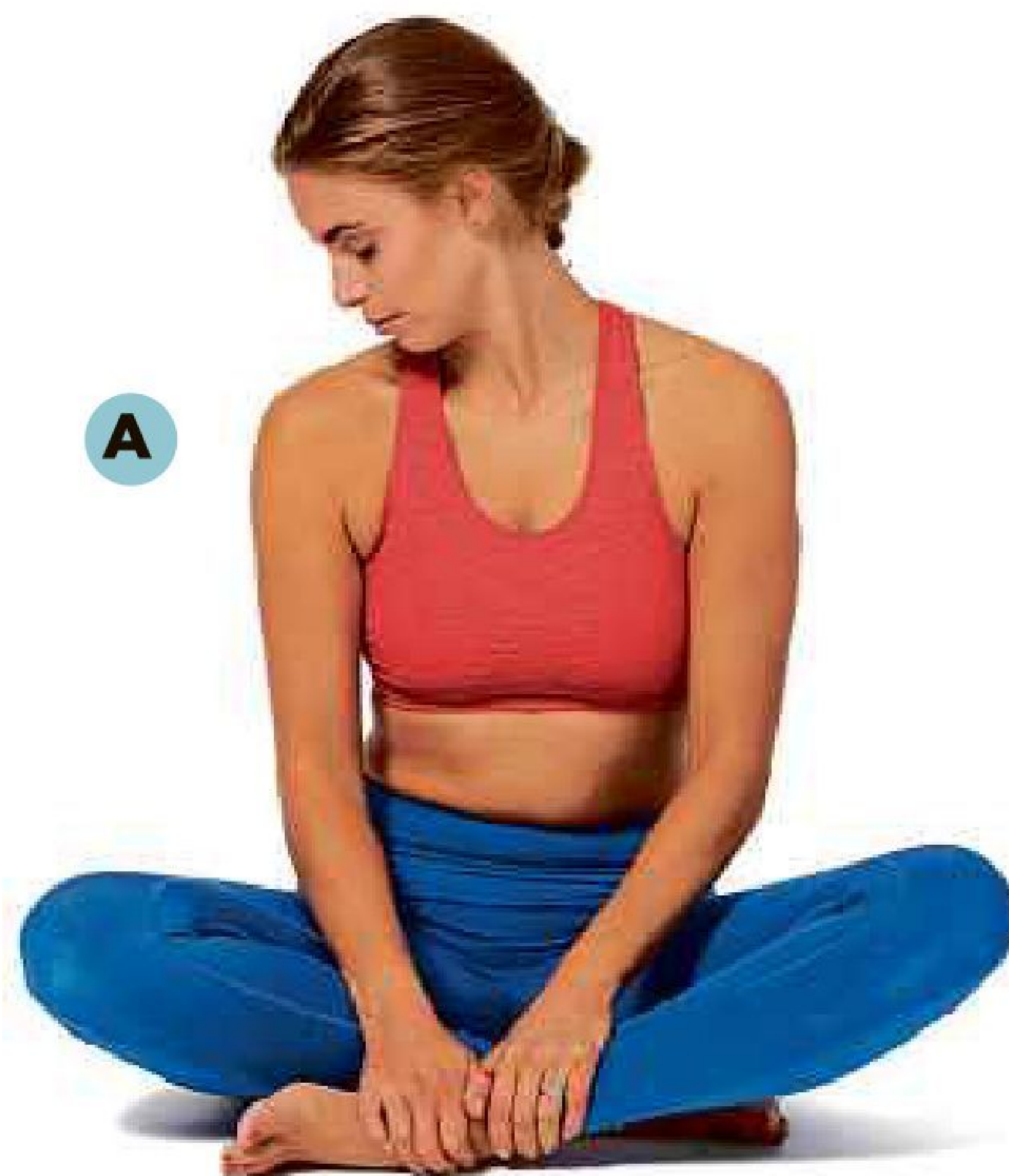
Stay **supple**

These simple exercises will help you kickstart your day

Yoga's not just about achieving tricky poses. Sometimes it's the simplest exercises that can make the biggest impact on your body's wellbeing. Incorporating some easy, daily yogic exercises and stretches into your every-day life will help keep your joints mobile, your limbs supple and your body and mind relaxed and stress free. Try the

following sequence of moves first thing in the morning to get your body moving or as a warm-up before your yoga practice to prevent injury and achieve more benefits. Try a few moves to stretch yourself when sitting at your desk. Or select moves to target areas of tension, such as tight neck muscles or a stiff lower back. Your body will soon look and feel that much younger.

Warm up
before every
yoga session,
choosing moves
to target the
areas you'll
be working



Head rolls

Sit in a relaxed cross-legged position on the floor, arms beside you. Relax your shoulders, inhale and bring your right ear down to your right shoulder (A). Exhale and draw your chin down to your chest (B). Inhale and draw your left ear round to your left shoulder (C). Exhale and return your head to the start position. Repeat five times in each direction.



1



Benefit

⇒ **Relieves a stiff neck**



Side stretch

Sit with your legs crossed with your right hand on the floor beside you. Inhale and bring your left arm out and up over your head. Exhale then inhale and elongate your left side. Exhale and draw your left hand further to the right, feeling the stretch (A). Inhale back to the centre and lower your arm. Repeat on the other side (B).



Benefit

⇒ Opens your lungs



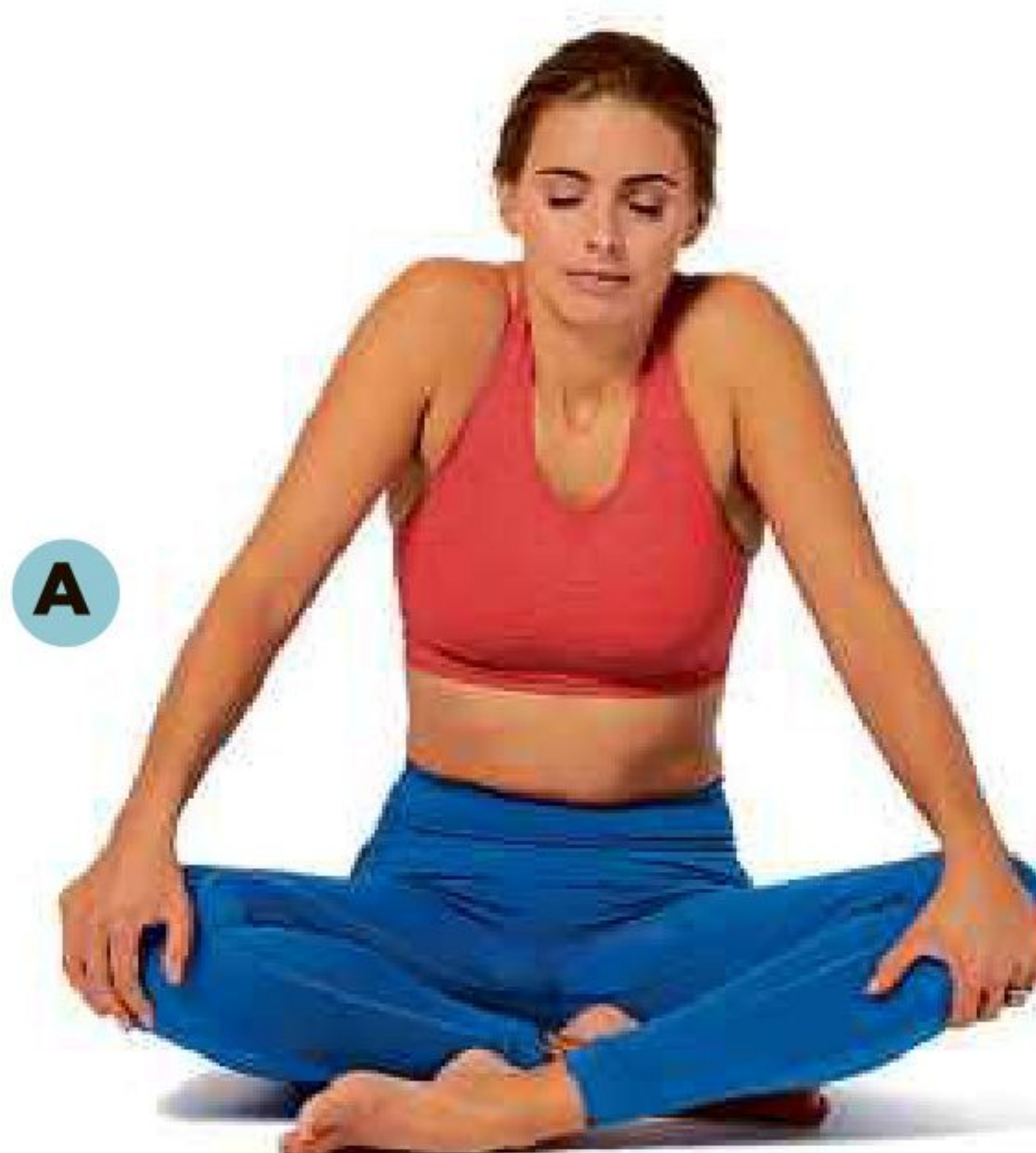
Side twist

Sit in an easy crossed-legged position and place your left hand on the floor behind your left buttock, fingers pointing backwards. Rest your right palm on the outside of your left knee. Inhale and sit tall. Exhale and rotate your spine to the left, moving from your waist then your upper body. Inhale, lengthen your torso and exhale further into the twist, looking over your left shoulder, if comfortable for your neck (A). Inhale back to centre and repeat on the other side (B).



Benefit

⇒ Keeps your spine supple



Shoulder shrugs

Sit comfortably cross-legged on the floor, arms relaxed beside you. Inhale and lift your shoulders as close to your ears as you can (A). Exhale and release your shoulders down, letting go of any tension (B). Repeat several times.



Benefit

⇒ Releases tension in your shoulders



Elbow circles

Sit in a cross-legged position and bring your hands to your shoulders, elbows pointing down in front of you (A). On an inhale, start to draw big circles with your

elbows, bringing them up (B) and round (C) in a clockwise direction. Do five circles in each direction, keeping your shoulders down and relaxed throughout.



Benefit

⇒ Stretches your shoulders



Happy baby

Lie on your back and take a deep breath, releasing any tension. Bend your knees, take hold of the outside of your feet and release your knees down towards your armpits. Flex your ankles and bring your calves to vertical, feeling the stretch in your inner and outer thighs and the release in your back. Take 10 breaths, then rock from side to side to massage your back. Exhale and release your feet back down.



Benefit

⇒ Opens your inner thighs

Knees to chest rolls

Lie down on your back. Once you are comfortable, bring your knees in to your chest. Place the palms of your hands on your knees. Now slowly start to roll your body to the right (A) and left (B), using your breath and core to control your movement. As your hips warm up, you can make small circles. Do the sequence several times in each direction.



Benefit

⇒ Keeps your lower back supple





Cat/Cow

Start on all-fours, knees beneath your hips, hands beneath your shoulders. Exhale and release your head and tailbone towards the floor, bringing your tailbone under and rounding your back towards the ceiling into Cat (A). Inhale, tilt your tailbone

up and release your spine down into a gentle backbend. Draw your shoulders down your back, take your chest forwards and up and look up into Cow (B). Alternate between Cat and Cow, following your breath in a slow, fluid motion. Repeat five times.

Benefit
⇒ **Massages your spinal discs**



Spine rolls

Sit upright, bend your knees and hold them into your chest with your hands. Take a breath and then, on an exhale, start to roll back (A) and forwards (B) in a rocking motion, keeping your chin into your chest and your core engaged. Repeat up to 10 times, feeling the motion massaging your spine.

Benefit
⇒ **Stretches your spine**

Hip stretch

Lie on your back and rest your right ankle on your left thigh. Thread your right hand between your thighs and interlace your fingers behind your left knee. Draw your left knee towards your chest and press your right forearm into your right thigh to open the right hip. Take five deep breaths, then repeat on the other side.

Benefit
⇒ **Opens your hips**



Flow into youth

Practising Sun salutation daily keeps you strong and supple

Want to stay supple, strong and youthful into old age? Practice a few daily rounds of Sun salutation. This flowing series of poses is almost a complete yoga practice and is the perfect beginner's sequence. By repeatedly folding and unfolding your body, Sun salutation lubricates your spinal discs while

oiling your joints, stretching and exercising your entire body. Research at the University of Calcutta in India found that doing Sun salutations helps increase your range of motion, strengthens your joints and muscles, boosts circulation, stimulates neural pathways, balances hormones and circadian rhythms and aids digestion. Ten minutes is all you need!

Sun salutation A *Surya namaskar A*

1 Mountain pose (p40)

Take a few, calming breaths. Then inhale and take your arms out and up to...

2 Extended mountain pose (p41)

Exhale, draw your belly in and fold down into...

3 Standing forward fold (p70)

Inhale and lengthen your spine, lifting your chest upwards into...

4 Half-standing forward fold (p71)

Exhale and fold back down into...

5 Standing forward fold (p70)

Inhale, then exhale and step or jump your feet back into...

6 Plank (p60)

Inhale, lengthening through your spine. Then exhale and lower into...

7 Four-limbed staff pose

Hold the pose or lower onto your knees.

Then inhale into...

8 Upward-facing dog (p81)

Lengthen your torso, engage your thighs. Then exhale into...

9 Downward-facing dog (p78)

Take a few breaths, lengthening your spine. Then inhale and step your left foot forwards between your hands into...

10 Crescent moon (p56)

Straighten your back leg and lengthen your torso. Exhale, step your right foot forwards and inhale up into...

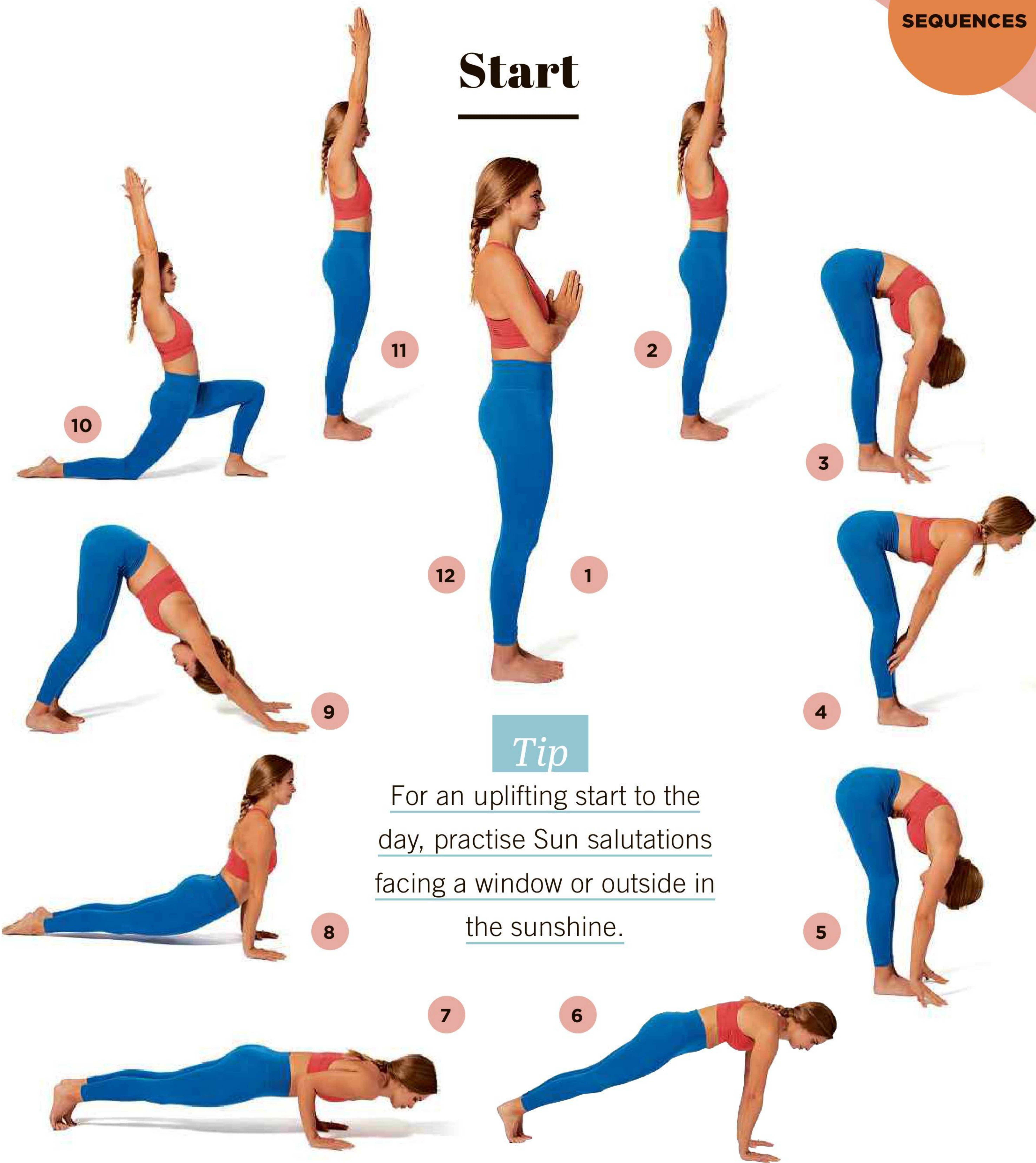
11 Extended mountain pose (p41)

Reach up, then inhale, bringing your hands to Prayer position into...

12 Mountain pose (p40)

Rest here for a few breaths, absorbing the benefits. Or continue straight on to your next round, leading with the other leg.

Start



Stay strong **and slim**

Stave off age-related muscle loss and prevent weight gain with these strengthening poses

Deeply stretch, tone and strengthen your muscles with this total-body sequence. Poses such as Side plank (p61) and Half moon pose (p62) engage all your body's major muscle groups, burning calories and fat and boosting your

bones, while moves such as Warrior I (p46) and Warrior II (p48) challenge your balance and engage your core, working your body hard. If you need to rest at any point, come down into Child's pose (p94).

Start

*Cross-legged pose
10 breaths*

*Warm-up
(p106)*

*Sun salutation A
(p110)*

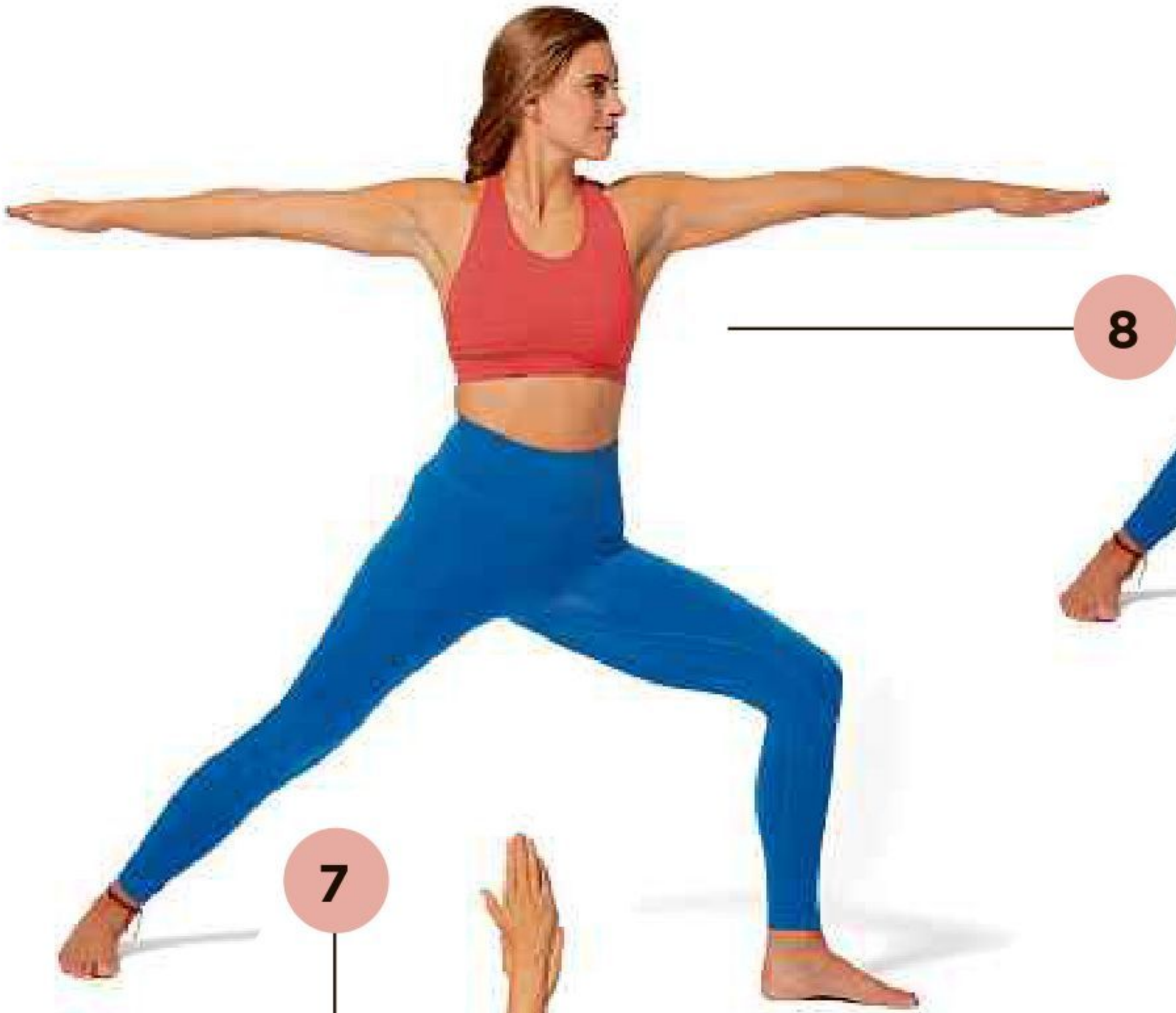


- 1 Chair (p42)
Repeat 3 times
- 2 Standing forward fold (p70)
- 3 Downward-facing dog (p78)
- 4 Plank (p60)
Repeat 3 times
- 5 Side plank (p61)

- 6 Warrior I (p46)
- 7 Warrior II (p48)
- 8 Extended side angle pose (p54)
- 9 Triangle (p52)
- 10 Half moon (p62)
- 11 Wide-legged forward bend (p72)



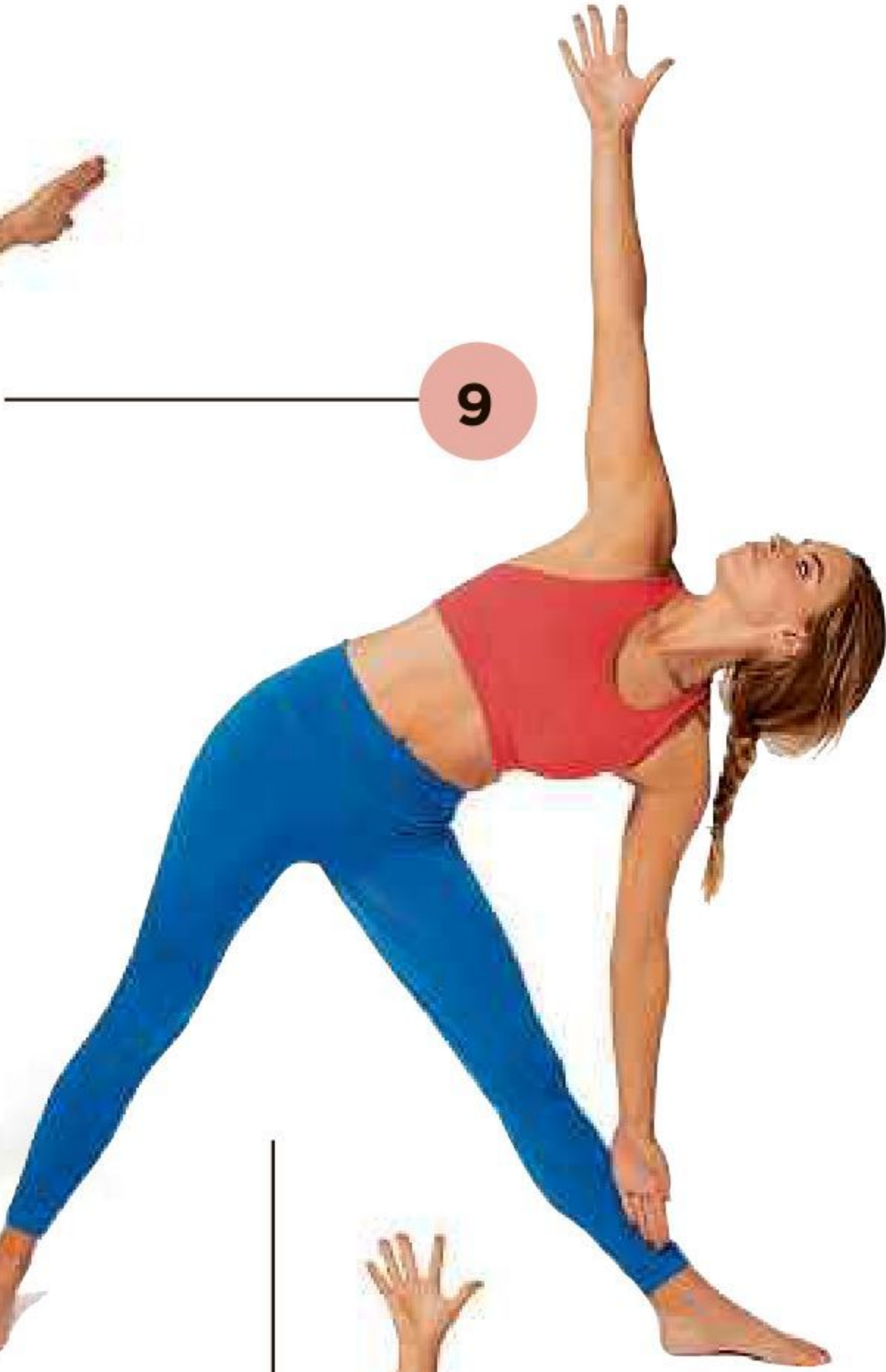
Take five to eight breaths in each pose unless stated.



8



9



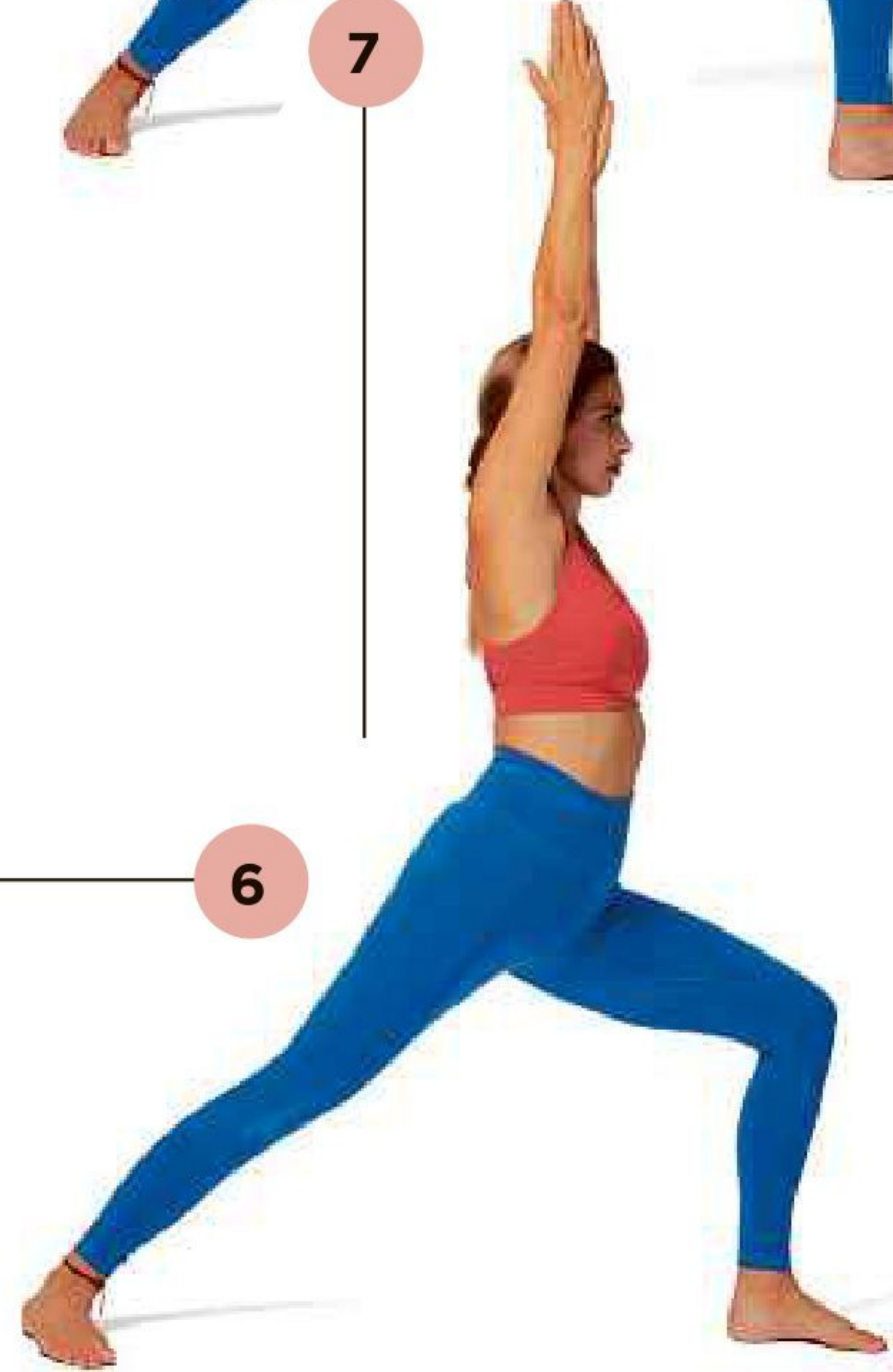
10



11



6



7



Finish

Savanasa (p102)

Boost your **brain**

Calm your mind and stimulate your grey matter with these recharging poses

Inspired by Sivananda yoga, this sequence is designed to rest and restore your body and mind, and rejuvenate your brain. Inversion poses such as Shoulderstand (p76), Plough (p77) and Standing forward fold (p70) will boost the

blood supply to your brain while backbend poses, including Cobra (p80) and Gondola (p86), will ease ageing anxiety and stress. Starting and ending the sequence with relaxation, you'll finish the session feeling calm and focused.

Start

5 mins
Savasana (p102)

Warm up
Sun salutation A (p110)



1 Shoulderstand (p76)
Rest in Savasana (p102)

2 Plough (p77)
Rest in Savasana

3 Bridge (p74)
Rest in Savasana

4 Seated forward fold (p92)
Rest in Savasana

5 Cobra (p80)
Rest in Savasana

6 Gondola (p86)
Rest in Savasana

7 Side twist (p107)

8 Garland (p58)
Rest in Savasana

9 Standing forward fold (p70)
Rest in Savasana

10 Triangle (p52)

Tip

As a bonus, these poses will also give your complexion a glow.



7



8



9



10



6



5

Finish

Meditation (p126)

Protect your **bones**

Strengthen your skeleton with this series of poses

When it comes to building bone density, high-impact workouts such as jogging or skipping are usually the first port of call. But yoga is also a surprisingly effective way to strengthen your bones. A natural form of resistance training, many of the balances and twist poses generate oppositional forces in your muscles, tugging on bones and stimulating bone-making cells to lay down

new bone and prevent age-related bone loss. By building muscle and improving your flexibility, yoga also helps support your body's skeleton. A study by rehabilitative medicine specialist and yoga teacher Loren Fishman at Columbia University, USA, found that older people who practised 12 yoga poses a day over 10 years saw improved bone density in their spine. Try this series of poses inspired by his research.



1 Tree (p44)

If it is more comfortable for your knee, rest the sole of your foot on the inside of your thigh.

If you feel balanced, bring your hands up over your head, palms together, fingers pointing up to the ceiling. Gaze ahead and breathe evenly.

2 Triangle (p52)

If you're a beginner or find it hard to reach the ground, rest your hand on a block to

support you. If your neck is still, don't lift your head but gaze ahead.

3 Warrior II (p48)

Keep your arms engaged and active. Breathe deeply into your belly.

4 Extended side angle (p54)

Extend your body from your heels right up to your fingertips and feel the stretch.

5 Reaching locust (p87)

Lift your whole body up. Keep your neck long and gaze down to avoid strain.

6 Bridge (p74)

Draw your shoulders together and press through your feet to lift your hips and torso.

7 Reclining hand-to-big toe A (p99)

If you can reach, you can hold your big toe with your left fingers.


8 Reclining hand-to-big toe B (p99)

Rotate your left leg so your toes point to the left and gently lower your leg to the floor.

9 Savasana (p102)

Let your body sink into the floor and let all your efforts ease away.




**Hold each pose
for 30 seconds
on each side.**



Relax & Restore

Now you've exercised your body, it's time to **rest** your mind and **restore** your energy with yogic relaxation. All the best yoga classes end with a few minutes of Savasana, followed by **breathing** and **meditation** exercises. Not only relaxing, these rituals offer profound benefits for body and mind that extend beyond the mat and can help you **slow down** the clock. Guided relaxation and breathing exercises help bring you into the moment, slowing down your heart rate, lowering blood pressure and resetting your body. Meditation offers even deeper **anti-ageing** benefits: it's proven to trigger the release of anti-ageing hormones in the brain and may help stave off age-related DNA damage. It's time to say 'om...'

Rest and renew

Slow down the sands of time by adding some yogic relaxation into your daily life

Feeling frazzled? Tension and anxiety doesn't just give you worry lines. A raised risk of heart disease, high blood pressure, weight gain and even diseases such as cancer are just some of the conditions linked to long-term stress. The constant release of stress hormones, such as cortisol and adrenaline, in the body is thought to trigger chemical reactions that can accelerate the ageing process by causing inflammation and damaging cellular DNA. It's even thought that chronic stress may age the brain and cause memory problems.

Relax remedy

How often do you really relax? While scrolling on your phone, watching TV or having a drink on a Friday night may be a tempting way to block out the pressures of everyday life, most of our favourite ways to 'unwind' offer little more than a sticking plaster for our symptoms. Yoga can re-introduce you to the benefits of true, deep relaxation and, once you've experienced it, you'll be hooked.

Unlike many workouts, yoga puts relaxation in centre stage. Most classes begin and end with a relaxation session, and demanding poses and sequences are often followed by a few moments' relaxation, for instance in Child's pose (p94). This allows you to restore your mental and physical energy to continue performing at your best. A valuable lesson we can apply to everyday life.

“Yogic relaxation can kickstart your body's regeneration processes and boost your immune system”

Chill time

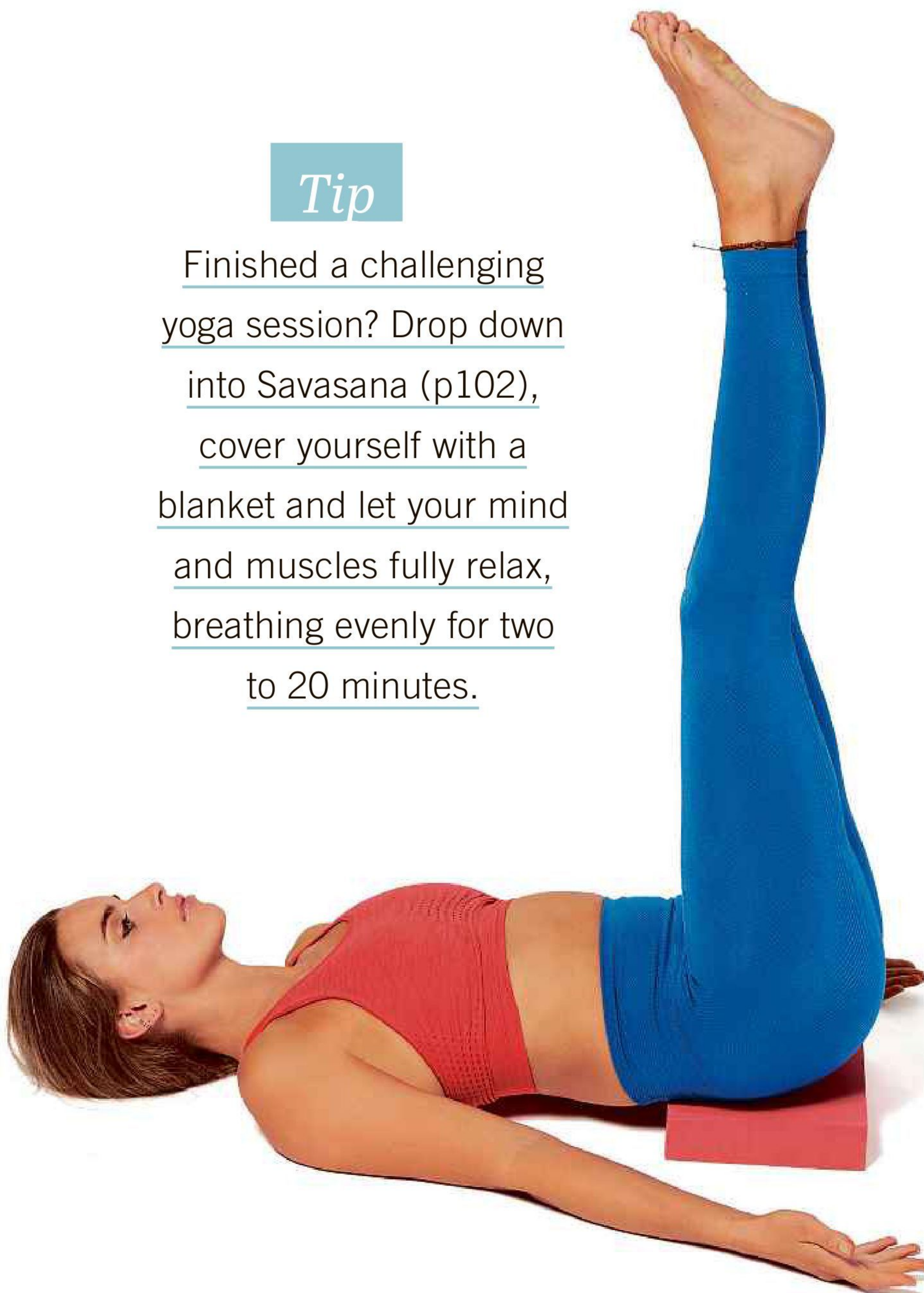
You've probably noticed how much older you can look after a poor night's sleep. Your skin is grey, eyes dull and radiance diminished as your body hasn't had time to repair itself. Yogic relaxation, like good sleep, can kickstart your body's regeneration processes and boost your immune system, helping you deal better with daily stresses and stave off the ravages of time.

By tuning into your breath (p124) and resting in Savasana (p102) or poses that quieten your mind, such as Standing forward fold (p70), you automatically switch on your relaxation response and start to tap into the benefits. Some yoga experts say Savasana is the most important of all yoga poses. It not only helps you assimilate the benefits of your practice, it encourages a long, slow breath that nourishes your inner organs and starts your nervous system's renewal processes.

Try this relaxing yoga pose whenever you need to unwind or renew your energy.

Tip

Finished a challenging yoga session? Drop down into Savasana (p102), cover yourself with a blanket and let your mind and muscles fully relax, breathing evenly for two to 20 minutes.



Waterfall pose

- This pose reverses the effects of gravity, relieving tired leg muscles, slowing your heart rate, calming anxiety and bringing blood to your head, nourishing your brain and skin.
- Lie on your back with your feet flat, knees pointing upwards. Lay your arms down by your sides, palms facing up.
- Root down into your feet, lift your hips up and slide one or two yoga blocks or a yoga brick underneath your sacrum to support your pelvis.
- Bring your knees into your chest and then raise your legs straight up. If it feels more comfortable, you can keep your knees bent.
- Let your body relax into the pose, breathing evenly.
- Stay here for a few minutes letting any tension ease away.
- To release, bend your knees and place your feet back on the floor. Lift your hips up and slide the block away.
- Spend a few breaths lying flat with your knees bent. Then slowly roll to one side and come back up to sitting.

Breathe youth

Want to look and feel younger? It's time to learn some yoga breathwork techniques

Have you ever noticed how good you look after a day outside in the fresh air? Your eyes shine, your skin glows and you feel energised and alert. That's the magic of fresh air, flooding your body and brain with vital oxygen and nutrients. Your breath has the power to provide your cells with life-giving energy while removing damaging toxins. It can energise and revitalise, calm and ground you. Yet in daily life, most of us use but a fraction of our lung power. Stress and lack of activity mean we breathe shallowly, or worse, hold our breath, depriving our body's cells of the nourishment they need to work effectively.

Prana power

In yogic philosophy, breath is linked to prana – the energy that nourishes and sustains all living things, created by the in-breath. Take a deep, full inhalation of breath and you'll notice how it invigorates and refreshes you. Follow this with a long, slow exhalation and you'll feel a mellow, grounding effect. Tuning into your breath in this way is one of the key principles of yoga.

The cycle of inhalation and exhalation feeds your practice, connecting your body and mind. Focusing on the breath grounds and calms you ready for practice. And using your breath as a guide during yoga sequences helps you

move rhythmically through each pose, energising your body and helping you hold tricky postures. Then, deepening your breath during relaxation and meditation brings peace to your sessions.

Beauty bonus

As well as assisting your practice, learning to control your breath in yoga can bring a host of wellbeing and beauty benefits. It's one of the reasons you look glowing after a class. Yogic breathing is designed to bring your body back into full health. It reduces high blood pressure, steadies your heart rate and reduces the stress hormones that can accelerate ageing.

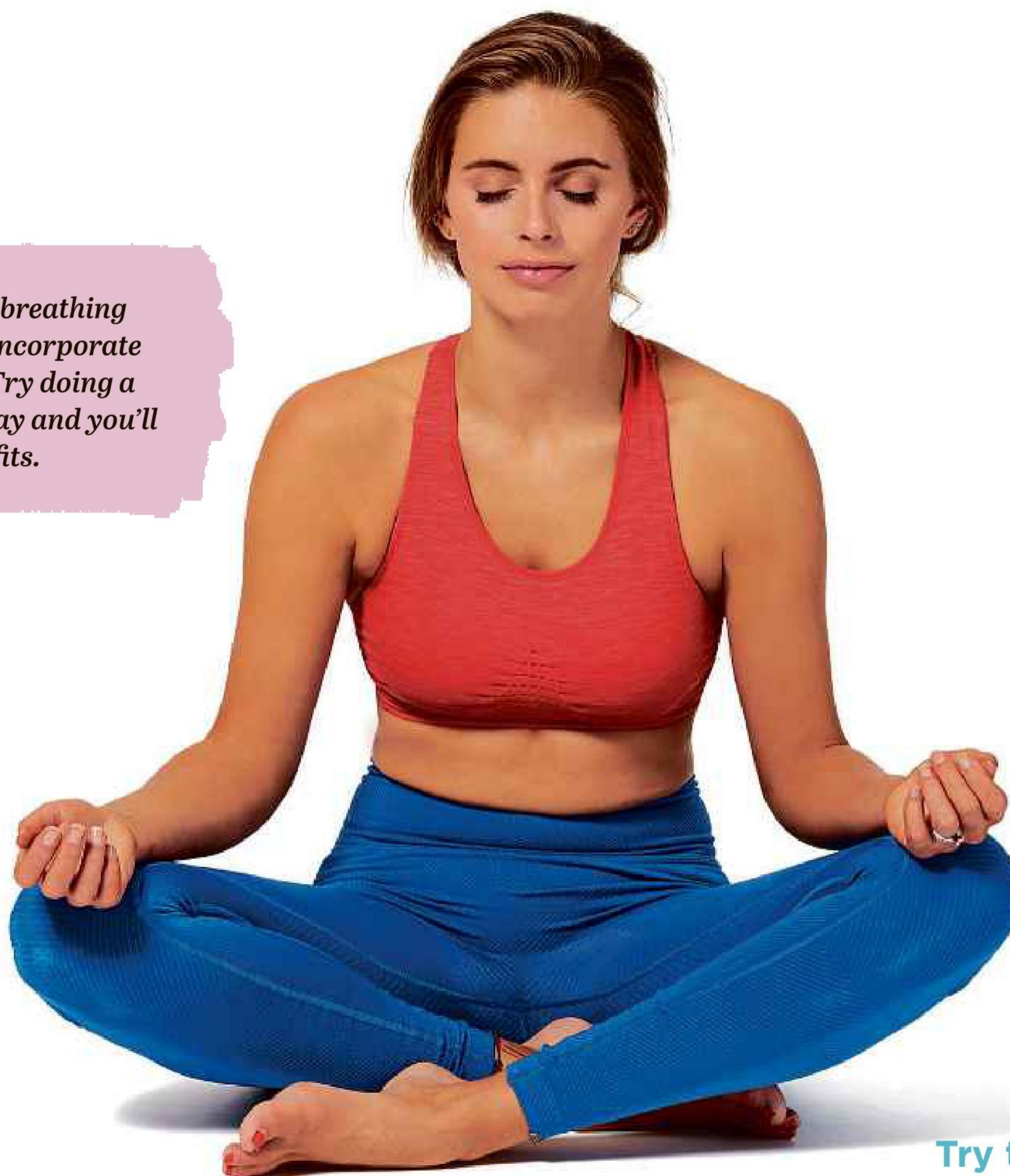
Special yogic breathing techniques, called Pranayama, not only support your practice but keep you well. These breathing exercises are even said to help you look younger, improving your complexion, whitening your eyes and detoxifying your inner organs. A study by Indian scientists found that yogic breathing techniques also aid weight loss by increasing levels of the hormone leptin, usually released when you're full up, telling your brain to stop eating.

Tip

Use your breath to guide you through yoga sequences.

Inhale as you unfold your body, lengthen your spine, open your chest or raise your arms. Exhale when you fold into a forward bend or release into a twist.

Here are some yogic breathing techniques you can incorporate into your daily life. Try doing a few minutes every day and you'll soon notice the benefits.



**Try this anytime
you need a
pick-me-up.**

Cleansing breath exercise

Kapalabhati breathing

Known as the ‘cleansing breath’, Kapalabhati breathing (or Bellows breath) energises your body in seconds. A series of powerful exhales and passive inhales, generated by contractions of the lower belly, it oxygenates, cleanses and invigorates. By flooding the body with oxygen, it is said to help renew its tissues, nourish the brain, and boost circulation, cleansing toxins. As a bonus, it also tones your tummy muscles! It’s the perfect breathing exercise to try first thing in the morning to energise your body and mind. Or do it anytime you’re

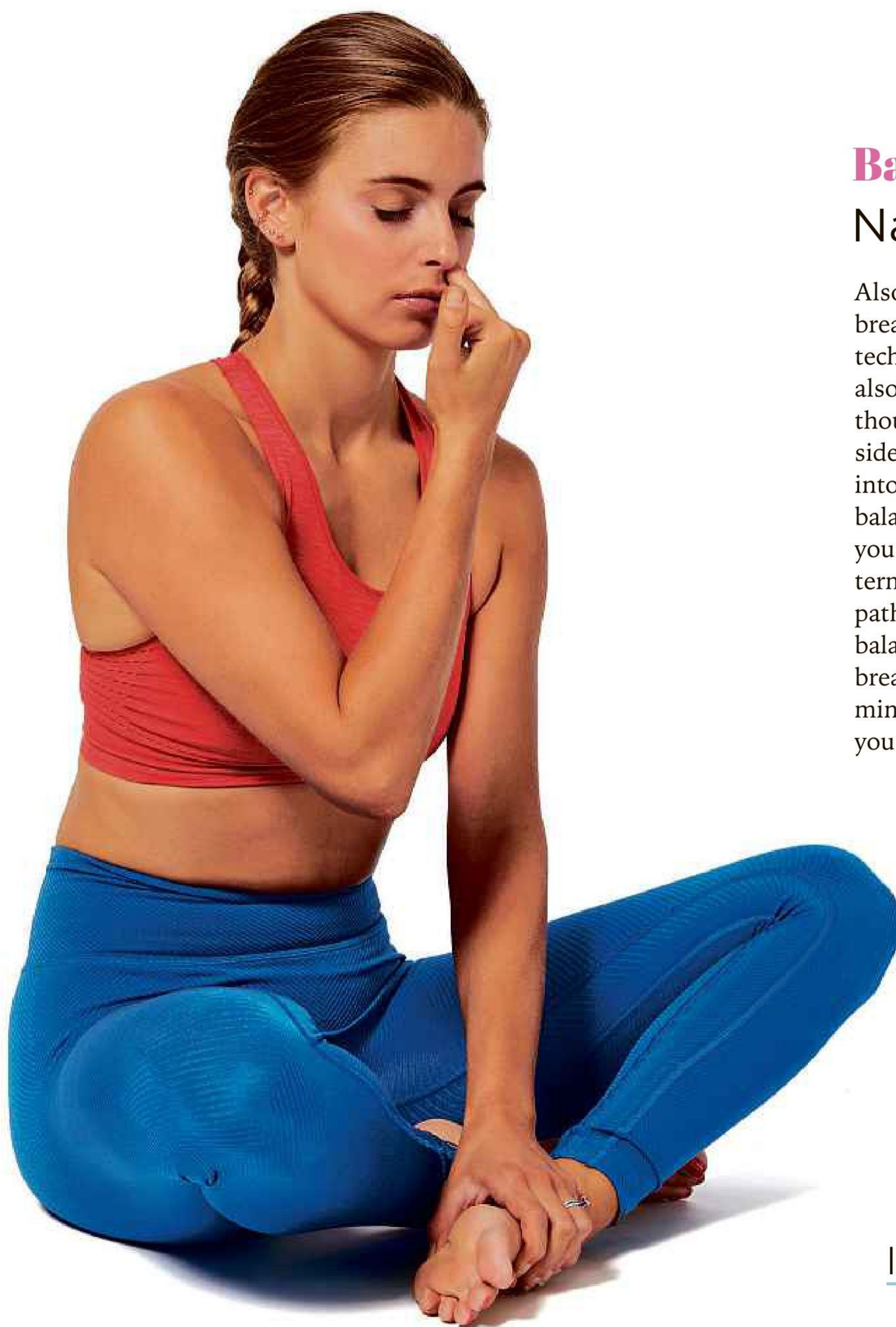
flagging. Kapalabhati breath is also often used as an opening exercise for full pranayama practice.

How to do it

- Sit in a comfortable kneeling or cross-legged pose. Relax and tune in to your breathing.
- Gently close your eyes. Focus on your lower belly. If it helps, you can cup your hands on your lower belly. Close your mouth.
- Begin to quickly contract your lower belly by drawing your abdomen inwards, forcing a gust of air from

your lungs, through your nose, in an explosive exhale. Let each inhale happen naturally as you release the contraction.

- Repeat the exhale/inhale cycle a few times and notice your abdomen moving in and out like bellows.
- Now speed up your exhalations so you’re doing one per second. You should be able to hear a burst of air on each exhalation.
- Do about 15 exhalations, rest and then start another cycle. You can build up to 25 or 30 breaths a cycle.



Balancing breath

Nadi sodhana

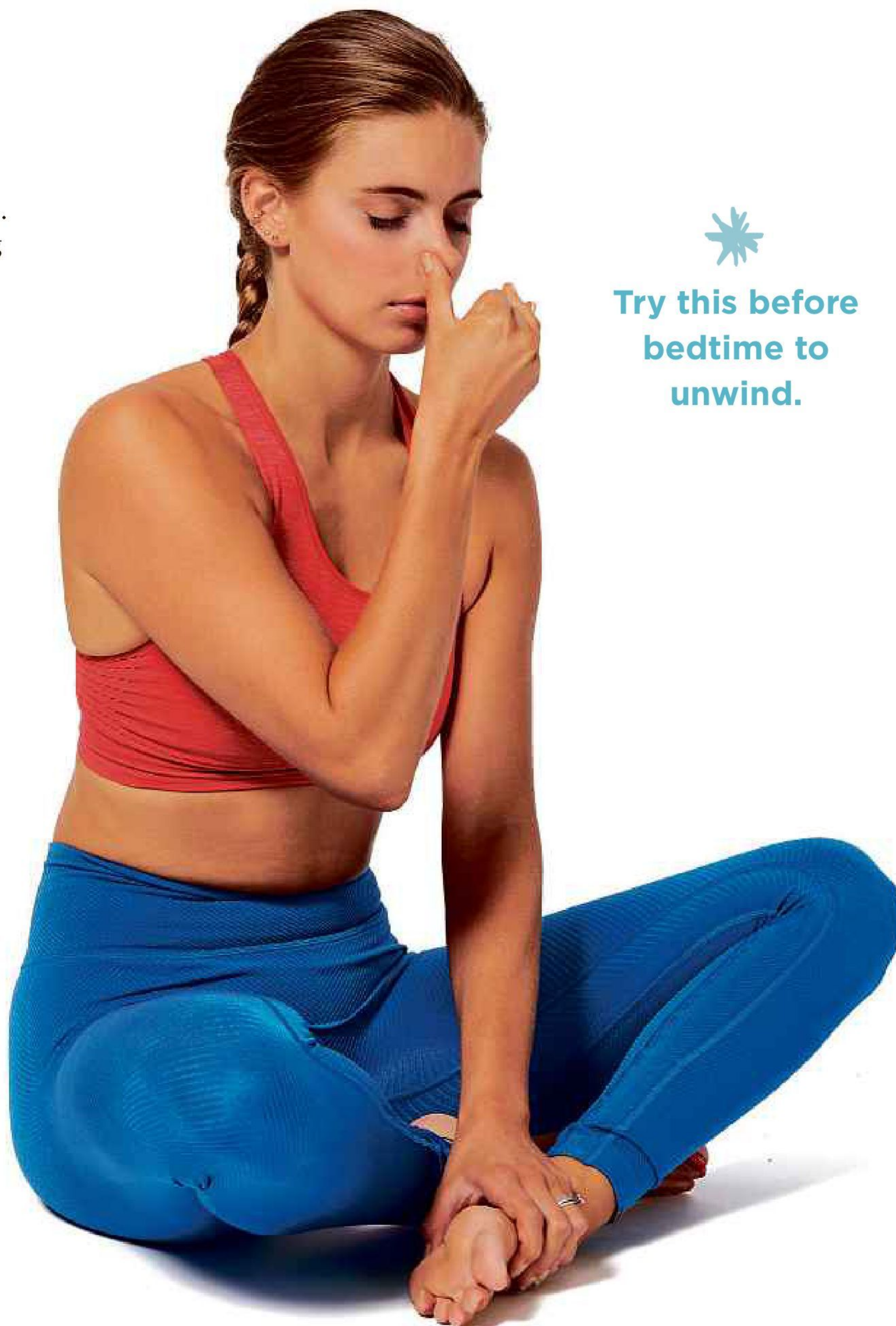
Also known as alternate nostril breathing, this is a key breathing technique, central to yoga and also to Ayurvedic philosophy. It's thought it balances the left and right sides of your brain, bringing you into harmony, calming stress and balancing your hormones to keep you healthy and young. In yogic terms, it purifies the nadis or energy pathways through the body. The balancing effect of alternate nostril breathing also prepares your body and mind for meditation. Try it whenever you need to feel more grounded.

Tip

If you struggle to keep your arm raised, try placing a bolster across your lap and support your elbow on it.

How to do it

- Sit in either a comfortable cross-legged pose or kneeling position.
- Draw your chin slightly down and inwards. Close your eyes.
- Bring your index finger and middle finger of your right hand to your nose.
- Close your left nostril with the ring finger of your right hand and let your thumb fall out to the right.
- Exhale fully through your right nostril. Then inhale through your right nostril.
- Now close your right nostril with your thumb, release your ring finger from your left nostril. Pause, then exhale through your left nostril. Inhale through your left nostril. Close this nostril with your ring finger. Pause, release your right nostril then exhale slowly through your right nostril. This completes one cycle.
- Continue for 10-30 cycles, keeping your spine long, shoulders relaxed and chest open.
- Once you have completed the cycles, gently bring your hand down to your lap. Sit quietly for as long as you wish, absorbing the benefits.
- Gently bring your awareness slowly back to the room and open your eyes.



**Try this before
bedtime to
unwind.**

Think yourself young

Add some meditation to your yoga practice
and you'll multiply the anti-ageing rewards

If there was a pill to take that could improve your memory and mood, reduce stress and anxiety, strengthen your resistance to age-related disease, reduce high blood pressure and help you look younger, chances are you'd be tempted to try it. Meditation offers all these benefits and more – and all it takes is a few minutes a day.

In the East, meditation has been a spiritual practice for thousands of years. Think of Zen Buddhist monks, for instance. In the West, it's often seen as a relaxation tool. But science is discovering that, aside from enhancing mental wellbeing, meditation also triggers physical changes in the brain that confer many more benefits for physical health, including slowing down the ageing process. And the more you practise, the more you benefit.

Brain benefits

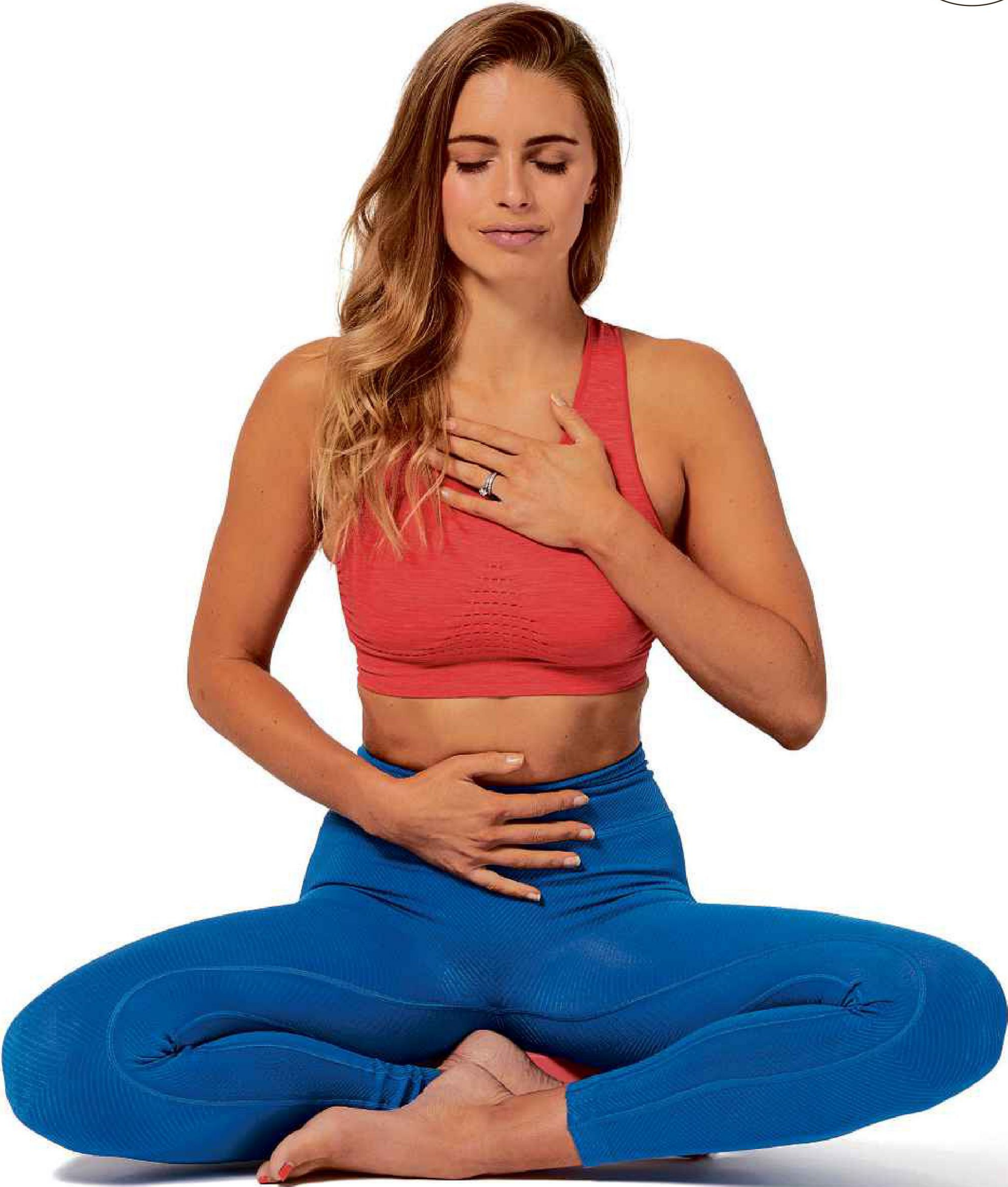
When you meditate, your breathing deepens, muscle tension and heart rate drop and your body is flooded with oxygen and feel-good hormones. Meanwhile, the deep relaxation that meditation brings helps restore and energise your body and mind, improving your sleep too. All these mechanisms have a positive impact on your health, helping reduce blood pressure and protecting your heart, for instance.

But meditation also physically changes your brain – a process called neuroplasticity. By studying electrical activity in the brains of people doing meditation, neuroscientists have discovered that the practice alters the way the brain processes thoughts and external stimuli, leading to a fall in the damaging effects of stress and anxiety.

Mindful movement

Turn your yoga practice into a moving meditation with these easy tips:

1. Before you start doing poses, lie down for a few minutes' relaxation, tuning into your breath to come into the present moment.
2. As you work with each yoga pose, focus on your breath and the sensations of your body.
3. Notice any areas of strain or pain and breathe into them, letting go of any tension.
4. End your session with 10 minutes of relaxation. Take a few deep breaths, then let your body and mind float away.





Anti-ageing effects

While short bouts of stress can be energising, chronic stress is known to have a more negative impact. It even can damage the body's DNA, shortening the length of telomeres (a recognised sign of cellular ageing). One Spanish study of 20 experienced Zen meditators, reported in the journal *Mindfulness*, found that the meditation experts had longer telomeres than non-meditators of a similar age.

Another study by the University of California, USA found that people who took part in a meditation retreat had higher activity of the enzyme telomerase which helps rebuild telomeres. Therefore, by meditating regularly, it's thought you can effectively slow down cellular ageing. And, as an added bonus, meditation also activates the pre-frontal cortex of your brain, helping you think more clearly.

Moving meditation

Like the sound of meditation but not sure where to start? Yoga, in itself, is a natural form of moving meditation. As you perform each pose, you automatically come in to the present moment, forgetting everyday thoughts and focusing purely on the here and now of your breath. While yoga classes today often focus on the physical side of yoga, you can make it a more mindful practice by tuning into your breath and following a few tips that will help bring you into stillness (see box, right). But many systems of yoga incorporate dedicated meditation and breathwork (p122), to deepen the benefits.

Body scan meditation

If you find it hard to clear your mind, try this focused technique:

- Settle down in a comfortable lying or seated position.
- Close your eyes and allow your mind and breath to settle.
- Focus your attention on one area of your body, such as your right leg. Become aware of its sensations, whether it's warm, cold, relaxed or tense. Acknowledge the sensations, then move on to your right thigh and do the same.
- Continue in this way through your body. If your mind wanders, simply draw it back to the sensations.
- Once you've finished, lie still for a few minutes, gently absorbing the relaxing effects of the exercise.

Mindful menu

Often called 'active relaxation', the secret to a successful meditation practice is to do little and often – for instance a few minutes in the morning to set you up for the day. There are many types of meditation but they all involve switching off mental chatter and focusing on something to refresh your mind. That could be repeating a mantra, following your breath, focusing on an object or visualising a colour.

One of the simplest meditation practices you can try is conscious breathing. If you never get a moment to sit still, you can even do this practice at your desk or on your daily commute. Close your eyes and settle your breath. Now, as you breathe in, silently repeat the words 'breathing in, I know that I am breathing in'. And as you breathe out, say 'breathing out, I know that I am breathing out'. Allow your body to expand as you inhale, and to release as you exhale. Take it slow and your mind will gradually settle.

You can also try the easy meditation exercises on this page:

Breathing meditation

This is an easy meditation method for beginners:

- Get settled in a comfortable sitting or lying position.
- Close your eyes and let your breath settle.
- Now focus all your attention on your breathing.
- Listen to your breath as you inhale and exhale.
- Feel the sensation of the air flowing in and out of your nostrils.
- Breathe slowly and deeply, taking longer on the exhale.
- If your attention wanders, simply acknowledge your thoughts and return to focusing on your breath.
- Once you're ready to finish, gradually bring your awareness back to your body and surroundings. Then sit gently observing the benefits.



New beginnings...

We hope you've enjoyed discovering some of the many, incredible anti-ageing benefits of yoga while working through this book. Whether you're following the sequences or simply dipping in and out of the poses, hopefully you're already feeling more fit and flexible and perhaps noticing a radiant glow! Keeping up a regular yoga practice is one of the very best things you can do to future-proof your health and wellbeing. We hope this is just the start of your yoga journey and a long, youthful life.

STAY YOUNG *with* Yoga

Want to stay fit, firm and flexible right into old age? Yoga is proven to have powerful stay-young benefits for body and mind, counteracting many of the classic signs of ageing. This powerful system of postures and exercises stretches and strengthens your entire body, boosting your bones, lubricating your joints, improving your agility and protecting your heart health. Yoga can help you beat stiffness, stave off injury, stay toned and even look younger. Meanwhile its breathing, relaxation and meditation exercises help combat the ageing effects of stress and boost your brainpower.

In Stay Young with Yoga, you'll find all the moves you need to look and feel your best, now and in the future. Learn the best yoga poses for your goals, try the step-by-step sequences and unlock the key to a younger you.

Inside



Best anti-ageing poses



Stay-young sequences



Stretches for a supple body



Mind-boosting meditation

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