

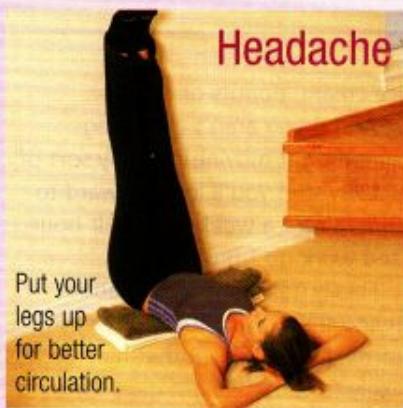
for your health

yoga for What Ails You

4 yoga poses that ease
pain and calm the mind

By Roxanne Hawn

Sometimes daily aches and pains, stresses and strains take their toll. Rather than reach for the medicine cabinet to mask minor ills, try these yoga poses to soothe what ails you.



Put your
legs up
for better
circulation.

Fold two large bath towels or small blankets long and narrow and stack them parallel to and approximately four inches from a wall. Sit on the stack with your left hip touching the wall. Using your right elbow for support, swing your legs up the wall. Lie back with your arms overhead, shoulders resting on the floor and chest open. The stack should support your pelvis and lower back, with your buttocks dropping slightly between it and the wall. Relax and stay in this pose 10 minutes or more.

Inverted poses, where the legs are higher than the head and heart, encourage good blood and lymphatic circulation. For this reason, they're often used during times of illness or stress.

Digestive discomfort

Stack towels or blankets lengthwise and about six inches across. Sit with the stack extending behind you. Place the soles of your feet together, sliding them close to your body. Secure a looped yoga strap, or bathrobe belt, around your lower back, below your hip bones and around your feet. Lift your chest and lay back on the blanket stack with arms resting out to your sides at shoulder level. Tuck an extra layer of blanket to support your head. If you feel any hip discomfort, place support under your knees.

By lifting the chest and spreading the pelvis, this pose creates space in the abdomen and encourages deep breathing, which can relieve stomach upset.

Upper back tension

Lay on your stomach. Place your hands near your shoulders and curl your toes under. Push up and lift your hips in the air—arms and legs straight, heels extending toward the floor. Concentrate on opening your chest and spreading your shoulder blades. Hold the pose for one minute.

This classic pose draws in the thoracic spine and lengthens the entire back, not to mention stretches the hamstrings. Done regularly, it lessens muscle tension and creates core strength, leading to better posture.



Menstrual cramps

Sit on the floor with your legs straight out. Bend your left knee and tuck your left foot against your right thigh, with your heel close to the groin. Place a folded blanket on top of your right knee. Lift your chest and exhale as you extend over the straight leg. Rest your head on the support for five minutes. Repeat with your left leg straight, right knee bent.

Supported forward bends calm the mind by keeping your energy in a closed loop. The bent knee creates space in the pelvis and abdomen, relaxing the uterus. While there is some hamstring extension, focus on gently stretching your lower back.