

YOGATM MAGAZINE

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BE PRESENT IN THIS MOMENT. **LOVE YOUR LIFE.**



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THAT'S WHAT
YOU ARE

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HOME SKINCARE RECIPES

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YOGA WORLD

DR. INGRID YANG & GEETA SIDHU-ROBB

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+ YOGA FOR HIGHLY SENSITIVE PEOPLE (HSP) + INDEPENDENT YOGA NETWORK CONFERENCE 2019

DESK YOGA

Words: Dr. Ingrid Yang

INTRODUCTION

In our modern lives, we spend, on average, 10 hours a day sitting down in front of a computer or at our desks. Even as yogis, we sit and interact with our technology more than we ever have before in human history. Working at your desk or computer for long stretches of time places excessive stress on certain muscles, which will inevitably lead to stiff muscles and soreness.

THE PROBLEM

Sitting at a desk, there are the muscles that get turned “off” and weakened. When constantly under stress, these muscles cause strain on the shoulder joints, which translates into pain around the neck and upper back. The tightness of these muscles also contributes to other poor posture habits such as neck forward flexion and chest muscle tightness. Additionally, when sitting at a desk, we tend to hunch forward, rounding our thoracic spine and shoulders, eventually emulating the Hunchback of Notre Dame.

THE SOLUTION

The human body is dynamically designed to adapt to a perform a variety of complex tasks, whether sitting at a desk, standing in line, or practicing happy baby pose. The way our bodies respond in these activities determines how we participate in life. If we can adapt our bodies into a hunched forward form, we can also adapt it into a comfortable, and more spacious posture. The key is the get up and move often. I recommend every 30-60 minutes if possible. One accessible way to move, while not losing focus on what you’re doing, is performing some yoga postures right at your desk.

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SHOULDERS

You'll want to reverse the action of what you have over-trained your muscles to do. In the hunched forward posture, you are internally rotating the shoulder and protracting the scapula, so aim to do the opposite: Externally rotate the shoulder joints and retract the scapula.

EXERCISE 1

- For the first pose, start by interlacing the fingers behind your back, and roll the shoulders back. This achieves the external rotation of the shoulders and draws (or retracts) the scapula toward each other. And then bring your hands away from you, that achieves the abduction action.
- Hold this for 5 breaths and repeat 3 times
- Another option is place your feet further than hip width apart and fold forward between the knees, with your hands reaching away from your back.

EXERCISE 2

- The second exercise also seeks to externally rotate and abduct the shoulders. I call this one goal-post arms. Brings you elbows up to shoulder height, bent at 90 degrees, and arch your back. Inhale for a 4-count and arch your upper back, and release on your exhale. Do this for a total of 5 breath cycles. This can also be done over the back of a chair for more traction.



NECK

As we strain to read our computer and phone screens, we jut our chins forward, which causes the cervical or deep neck flexors (longus capitis and longus colli) to strain and become tight. These muscles are also key accessory muscles of breathing, so these stressed muscles can also cause constricted breathing. The goal is to stretch these muscles in all planes of motion to relieve strain and improve your resting breathing.

EXERCISE 3

- Gently relax your chin to your chest, maintain a lift in your shoulders. Hold for 5 breaths. You'll feel tension in the back of your neck, and if you want more stretch you can interlace your fingers behind the back of your head and squeeze your elbows toward your head. Repeat 3 times.

EXERCISE 4

- Gently relax your chin to your chest, maintain a lift in your shoulders. Hold for 5 breaths. You'll feel tension in the back of your neck, and if you want more stretch you can interlace your fingers behind the back of your head and squeeze your elbows toward your head. Repeat 3 times.

EXERCISE 5

- Drop one ear toward your shoulder. Don't bring your shoulder up to your ear. Hold for 3 breaths, relax and to the starting position on your next inhale. Tilt your head to the other side and repeat the stretch. Again, cycle through 3 times.

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HIPS

Sitting at desk all day can cause flattening of the lumbar curve because our hip flexors get stuck in flexion. Reverse this by stretching the fronts of the hips. The fun of these poses is that you get to use your desk chair!

EXERCISE 6

- Step your right foot over your chair, resting the back of your upper right leg on the seat.
- Extend your left leg behind you; the more you straighten your left knee, the more opening you will feel in that hip.
- This stretches the psoas major, a major culprit to tight hips and low back pain.
- Hold this for 5 breaths, switch sides, and complete 3 stretches on each side.

EXERCISE 7

- Stand about two feet from your chair, place your hands on your hips, and step your right foot ON your chair this time.
- Root your left (back) foot into the ground and lean the trunk and hips forward.
- Hold this for 3 breaths, switch sides, and complete 3 stretches on each side.

DR. INGRID YANG, M.D., J.D., E-RYT 500, C-IAYT is a deeply knowledgeable and inspiring teacher, who has made it her purpose to incorporate medicine into yoga, and yoga into medicine. She has been teaching yoga since 1999 and is a physician specializing in Internal Medicine, based in San Diego, CA. Ingrid leads trainings and retreats all over the world, with a special focus on the kinesthetic physiology and healing through breathwork, meditation and mind-body connection. In her past lives, Ingrid was a litigation attorney, founder of Blue Point Yoga Center, and a jazz singer in Australia. When she is not doctor-ing or yoga-ing, Ingrid loves to surf at sunset, travel the world, and play on the beach with her dog Rusty. Find out more at www.ingridyang.com or [instagram.com/ingridyangyoga](https://www.instagram.com/ingridyangyoga).