

Dhanura-asana (The Bow Pose)

The Sanskrit word dhanur means bow-shaped, curved or bent. The bow referred is a bow as in "bow and arrow." This asana is so named because the body mimics the shape of a bow with its string stretched back ready to shoot an arrow.

Position of readiness

Take prone lying position, legs together, hands straight by the side of the thighs, chin resting on the ground.

Steps for Practice

1. Lie on your stomach with your arms stretched on both sides. Place your right or left cheek on the floor. Bend the knees, bringing the feet up. Bring the heels close to the buttock area. Reach back to hold the ankles with your hands. The knees and the ankles should be closer to one another.
2. Inhale as much air as you can. Straighten up your neck and head. Holding the breath and keeping the arms straight, arch the entire body upwards. Lift the head, chest and thighs off the floor. Remain in this position for 5 to 6 seconds.
3. Exhale and return to the floor smoothly. Keep holding the ankles while you return to the first position. Put the cheek back on the floor and breath normally.
4. Leave the ankles and let the legs gradually return to the floor. Bring the arms and hands to the floor on both sides and relax for 6 to 8 seconds. You have completed one round of bow posture.

Advanced: Rock yourself back and forth gently while holding on to your ankles.

Benefits

This asana has numerous benefits. It is a combination of two asanas (Bhujangasana - the cobra pose, in which only the front of the torso is raised, and the Shalabhasana or the grasshopper asana, in which the legs are raised).

1. Strengthens kidneys
2. It makes spine and back muscles flexible, removes nervous weak-ness.
3. It helps in removing constipation and pitta disorders.
4. Strengthens thigh muscles
5. In addition, it is also found to be extremely beneficial for diabetics and those with constipation problems.
6. Activates and strengthen all the major and minor joints of the body.
7. Strengthens all the abdominal muscles and organs.

8. Develops digestive power and removes extra weight and fat from the stomach and waist areas.
9. Enhance the elasticity of the spine.
10. Chest, lungs and neck are strengthened and activated, benefiting people suffering from asthma and other respiratory problems.
11. For women, it corrects menstrual and other troubles related to reproductive organs.

Daily Practice

Start with two rounds on the first day and gradually to a maximum of four rounds. In the first position in case you find it difficult to hold the ankles then hold the toes.

Contraindications:

You have back problems, hernia or cervical spondylosis. Do not attempt the bow while pregnant, as these asana increases the pressure on the abdomen.

Restriction:

1. Do not try to bring the toes near ears forcefully if it is difficult.
2. Gradually increase the practice.
3. It is desirable to practice simple Dhanurasana before one resorts to practice above mentioned Dhanurasana.

Note :

In this asana, all your efforts should be to give a backward pull with the legs and not a forward pull with the hands. Thus the knees remain on the floor and the only portion which is lifted and pulled upwards is the area above the abdomen, i.e. the chest and the head area.