

## **Surya Namaskar (Sun Salutations postures)**

**Suryanamaskar** (an ancient Indian yoga) is the art of solar vitalization. It is a complete meditative technique in itself as it includes Asanas, Pranayama, Mantras and Mudras. It has got three aspects: form, vital energy and rhythm. It is the easiest way for a person to get used to Yoga. It should be done along with chanting of mantras in every posture. In simple words, Suryanamaskar is a combination of 12 different postures, followed in a particular sequence with a specific breathing pattern. It helps an individual to vitalize and unblock the whole system. It reduces fat from almost all parts of the body, as it stretches each and every muscle and tones it.

Many people in the West look for the best exercise routine to help them stay in shape. Here is something that has been around for thousands of years and has withstood the test of time. It strengthens the body, circulation, the breathing, and keeps the body limber and in shape. And you can have this completely free of charge, without a fitness coach, by simply using the following instructions.

"Surya Namaskar" is Sanskrit which means obeisance or prostrations (Namaskar) to the sun (Surya). It implies that one rise before sun rise in order to do this exercise or pay obeisance to the rising sun. This is around 5 to 5:30 AM. Of course, this exercise is good no matter what time you may use it, but it is best done while the stomach is empty, before eating. It is a yogic exercise which consists of ten particular postures, one following another, in a fixed, cyclic order to ensure improvement and good health in one's digestion, agility, rejuvenation, beauty and longevity. It will also help one lose weight and trim the waist. There is no equipment to buy, or membership to a gym or fitness club that must be purchased. You just need a little space in your apartment or home. If, however, you begin to feel short-breathed or dizzy, then take a break. Also, pregnant women should not practice it, but can continue it during their period because it can help digestion and the flow of energy and outflow of waste needed at this time.

### **Position of readiness**

1. Stand up in relaxed posture, either holding the feet together or slightly apart with both the arms by the sides.
2. Close the eyes and become conscious of whole body.
3. Now get conscious of the inner self and relax mentally.
4. Release all the tensions and get in complete harmony with the body.
5. Get the conscious level to the sole of the feet.
6. Let it go in the floor along with all the tensions as if by the gravity.
7. Experience the surging vital force from the earth, enveloping the entire being.
8. Finally raise the consciousness level between the eye brows.
9. Envision the bright crimson sun flooding your entire being with its vibrant, vital and healing beams.
10. Now get in the practice of all Suryanamaskarasana in one smooth synchronized go intertwined with another like a rhythmical dancing movement.

## **Steps for Practice**

**POSTURE 1:** First you stand erect, ready to face the early morning sun. Stand straight with chest out and spine erect, looking forward with hands folded in respect in front of the chest where heart is located. It is like a stance of prayer. Close your eyes and chant the Mantra **Om Mitrayah Namaha** breath normally. Once you start doing the routine, you spend about one second in this pose, and the others that follows. Of course, if one is weak or aged, or if you are new to the routine, you may take this a little slower.

**POSTURE 2:** Now, while inhaling chant **Om Khagaya Namaha**, raise your arms up in the air while keeping the hands together, and arch your self backwards as far as you can go, forming a crescent-like curve from your feet to the hands. This posture helps retain the flexibility of the spine.

**POSTURE 3:** Now, while exhaling and chanting **Om Suryaya Namaha**, bring your hands down to your feet so that you quickly bend forward at the waist, while keeping the legs as straight as possible. The best position is to bring the hands flat to the floor on either side of your feet, while keeping the head as close to the knees as you can. If you are not that flexible, then just do the best you can. The most important aspect of this pose is that it squeezes the stomach and assists in digestion to extract any vitamins and nutrients in one's food, which helps turn it into blood. It also loosens any fat that has accumulated there. Postures 2 and 3 are actually the easiest to do, so if you cannot do the others, at least do these.

**POSTURE 4:** From position three, while inhaling and chanting **Om Bhanuvae Namaha**, put your hands on the floor and lower your hips and stretch your left leg back as far as you can, letting the foot rest on the toes and the knee touch the ground, while you bend your right leg in a crouching stance, letting the right knee come up to your chest. Keeping your hands flat on the ground, your arms straight, arch your head upward and back so you are looking at the ceiling or sky. This forms a crescent shape from the left heel up to the top of your head. This position helps ensure flexibility of the spine and immunity from diseases in the left leg muscles and ligaments.

**POSTURE 5:** While exhaling chant **Om Ravi Namaha**, now keep your hands flat on the ground and carry the right leg back to parallel the left leg, sided by side, both feet pressing firmly flat against the floor, while bringing your hips up into the air as high as they will go. Keep your arms and back in a straight line as your head faces the ground, and bring the chin to the chest, making you look at your knees. This makes your body form an upside down "V" or a triangle between you and the floor.

**POSTURE 6:** Now, while keeping the hands and feet in the same places, having fully exhaled hold the breath and while chanting **Om Pushnae Namaha** bring your hips down while moving the head and shoulders forward, straightening the whole body near the floor. Keep the face downward with the forehead, the chest and knees lightly touching the ground, and the hips slightly raised. With the forehead, chest, and two palms, knees, and

feet touching the floor, it is called Sashtang Namaskar, or prostrations with eight points touching the floor.

**POSTURE 7:** The next posture, while inhaling chant **Om Hiranya-Garbhaya Namaha**, flows from position 6, which is done merely by straightening your arms and lifting your chest upward and arching your head back so that you are looking at the ceiling. Your feet and knees rest on the floor while your arms hold the rest of your body a little above it. Again you form a body-length crescent, from your feet up to your head. This yogic position is known as "the cobra".

**POSTURE 8:** Now exhale and chant **Om Marichiye Namaha**, let your body flow into position 5 again by lowering your head and chest, keep your arms and legs straight, and raise your hips as high as they will go. As your head faces the ground, keep your arms and back in a straight line and bring the chin to the chest, making you look at your knees, which forms an upside down "V" again.

**POSTURE 9:** Now, while inhaling chant Mantra **Om Adityaya Namaha**, we flow into the same position as number four, but stretch the other leg. So we first bend the left leg and bring the left foot forward on the floor. Keeping your hands flat on the ground, bring your hips down while moving the chest and head forward, allowing the left knee to reach up to the chest, and then arch your head up and back. The right foot stays in its place, letting the foot rest on the toes, which makes the right leg get stretched backward when your chest moves forward. This gives the body a crescent shape from the right heel up to the top of your head. This position helps ensure flexibility of the spine and immunity from diseases in the right leg muscles and ligaments.

**POSTURE 10:** Now we go back into posture three. Keep your hands in place as you bring your right leg forward to be parallel with the left leg. With both feet flat on the floor (if you can keep them that way), and the legs kept straight, the body is bent at the waist, while exhaling chanting **Om Savitre Namaha**, with the forehead touching the knees (if you can bend this much). If you are not this flexible and cannot bend like this, then simply do it as best you can and keep the head as close to the knees as possible.

**POSTURE 11:** In this step the posture is the same as in step 2. Inhale and chant **Om Arkaya Namaha**

**POSTURE 12:** In this step the posture is the same as in step 1. Breathe normally and chant **Om Bhaskaraya Namaha**

Start the whole cycle of postures again for the next Surya Namaskar.

The best hour for the practice of this asana is obviously the sunrise time, during which both the body and the surrounding environments are most peaceful with themselves thus all the physical organs are most receptive for the solar vital energy. Sunset time is also good for the practice as it stimulates the digestive fire. One should always perform this before other asanas, in an open area directly facing the Sun and on an empty stomach.

### **Contraindications:**

1. Fever, acute inflammation, boils or rashes
2. High blood pressure
3. Coronary artery diseases
4. Hernia
5. Intestinal tuberculosis
6. Severe back problems
7. Slipped disc
8. Sciatica
9. Menstruation
10. 2nd or 3rd trimester pregnancy

### **Benefits:**

1. Keeps your backbone like a spring.
2. Keeps you active.
3. Body becomes flexible.
4. Keeps all the aches and pains at bay.
5. Thus enhances mental clarity with fresh and oxygenated blood to the brain.
6. An ideal practice to increase awareness and bestowing good health and well being.
7. The Surya Namaskar or Sun Salutations postures remove the psychosomatic tensions and help in calming down the mind.
8. The endocrine system is harmonized.
9. The heart and the lungs get energized due to controlled breathing.
10. The nerve points as well as the nervous system improve.
11. Stimulates and balances endocrine, circulatory, respiratory and digestive systems
12. Influences the pineal gland and hypothalamus to prevent pineal degeneration and calcification
13. Ensures deep and rhythmic breathing movement
14. The spine gets stretched. It becomes supple. Spinal area pains and aches are relieved.
15. Spinal curve disorders and deviations get corrected.
16. Surya Namaskar or Sun Salutation Yoga Poses stimulates the peristalsis and thereby helps in regulating bowel functioning.
17. Surya Namaskar yoga asana movements tone up the organs and limbs. The limbs become symmetrical while the internal vital organs become more functional.
18. The entire muscle system becomes stronger. That includes the muscles of the eyes, neck, shoulders, arms, hips and the legs.
19. You can cure ailments like sciatica, diabetes, blood pressure, mental tension, backache and indigestion among others.
20. The abdominal exercises relieve the abdominal viscera via the stretching and contracting movements of the abdominal area. The massages prove to be beneficial for the abdominal muscles as well.

21. Surya Namaskar or Sun Salutation exercises are best for reducing abdominal flab.  
The fat in other parts of the body like the thighs and the waist also gets reduced.
22. Blood circulation improves to all the organs and parts of the body.