

yoga basics



Feel Good with Yoga

By Marsha T Danzig, Founder, Yoga for Amputees®



Yoga, a five thousand year old mind, body and spirit science, is a combination of body postures, deep breathing, hand gestures, chanting, meditation and deep relaxation. Over two billion people in the world practice yoga, according to United Nations. How can yoga benefit amputees too?

Amputation is a high stress experience. From pain to recovery, fitting prosthetics to plotting uneven surfaces, we amputees face a lot. Practicing yoga daily can help us thrive in all areas of life beyond limb loss and build a healthier body, mind and spirit.

Practicing yoga daily increases flexibility, strength, and energy. Amputees need all three to function well. Amputees are constantly compensating for missing limbs by over or under using other limbs and body parts. Yoga helps balance that out. Through yoga poses, a steady gaze and deep breathing, you learn to maintain focus, develop better equilibrium, and build strong core muscles, which increase your physical capabilities.

Yoga cleanses your organs, which can become sluggish from lack of movement,

pain medications, and stress. Yoga naturally stretches, twists and lengthens the spine in all directions, making your alignment better, lessening the load on the body.

Deep breathing, which is the hallmark of yoga, can reduce blood pressure, lessen pain, increase metabolism, help you heal faster, calm your nervous system, and lower your stress significantly. Even a few minutes of breathing each day can make a difference in our health and outlook on life.

Deep breathing has been especially helpful for people dealing with trauma, pain and recovery. Taking deep, conscious breaths can make us more relaxed. It is far easier to learn anything, such as walking, or yoga(!) when we are relaxed.

It takes mental energy to be an amputee. After limb loss, we quickly learn the art of resilience and mindfulness, but we may also become mentally fatigued and have trouble sleeping. A disciplined daily practice offers new neural pathways in the brain which create a more positive outlook on life.

Finally, losing a limb takes an emotional toll. The physical poses and breathing techniques help amputees release strong emotions and stay in the present moment.

This builds confidence and helps amputees regain some control over the body, mind and spirit, which is so important in the healing process.

Yoga is preventative medicine for all amputees that keeps us in good physical, mental and emotional shape for many years to come. Give yoga a try to improve your well-being.

Practice Yoga At Home

Overleaf is a short home yoga practice to try on your own. Yoga can be done with or without your prosthesis. Some amputees do their entire practice in a chair or on the floor, while others practice standing. There is no right way to practice, only the way that works for your body.

To practice yoga at home you will need:

- A quiet uninterrupted space
- A wall
- Yoga props: a yoga mat, two folded blankets, two yoga blocks, a yoga strap, a chair
- Decide in advance if you plan to wear a prosthesis or not.
- You can do this practice standing, seated in a chair, or sitting on the floor.

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Center yourself ▼



- 1 Sit comfortably
- 2 Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths
- 3 Focus your mind inward
- 4 Notice how you feel as you focus
- 5 Open your eyes when calm

Breathe deeply ▼



- 1 Take a deep breath in through the nose
- 2 As you exhale, sigh through the mouth
- 3 Repeat this breath 3-5 times
- 4 Notice your shoulders relax

Pose

Spinal twist ▼



- 1 Turn your belly button to the right
- 2 Reach the right hand to the left side of the chair
- 3 Stay there for 3- 5 breaths
- 4 Inhale
- 5 Return to center
- 6 Repeat on the other side

Cat and cow pose ▼



- 1 Reach your chest up towards the ceiling as you breathe in
- 2 Exhale as you round your spine forward.
- 3 Repeat 3-5 times

Half moon ▼



- 1 Inhale
- 2 Lift your arms up overhead (If living with high blood pressure do not lift your arms above your head)
- 3 Interlace your fingers, lean torso to the left
- 4 Inhale back to centre
- 5 Exhale, lean torso to the right
- 6 Inhale to center

Relaxation ▼



- 1 Come to the floor or sit in a chair. (If on the floor, roll down onto your back, adding yoga props to support residual limbs)
- 2 Close your eyes, placing your hands on your lap
- 3 Imagine all your thoughts and worries floating up to the sky, letting them go
- 4 Relax here with eyes closed 5 – 10 breaths

Enjoy.

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LimbPower exists to engage amputees and individuals with limb impairments in regular and sustained participation in physical activity, sport and the arts to improve quality of life and to aid physical, social and psychological rehabilitation. To find out more about how we can help you, visit our website. LimbPower is a Limited Company No. 09513024 Charity No 1132829

