



# CHAIR YOGA

## BENEFICIAL EXERCISES FOR EVERYONE!

Yoga is a discipline composed of breathing, meditation and physical poses that are meant to improve the body's strength and flexibility. The physical benefits of yoga include:

- ✦ Increasing strength
- ✦ Improving stamina
- ✦ Relaxation
- ✦ Overall physical health

Yoga is not just for those who are "flexible"! Exercises can be modified so that everyone can see a benefit.

Chair yoga is an adapted version of generalized yoga that provides modification for individuals with any mobility restrictions, or who may feel uncomfortable getting up and down off the floor.

The poses included are a short flow that can be performed anywhere, with only one piece of equipment: a chair. This practice can be applied as a stretching routine for every day or after regular exercise, and also includes some light strengthening poses. As yoga is also a practice of mindfulness and self-awareness, focus on keeping your breaths deep and even, and follow the cues included in each pose to sync your breath rhythm with your movements. Take each pose slowly, and modify as you need. Listening to your own body's specific needs is key to a successful yoga practice, so adjust as necessary.



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## **Cat/Cow**

### INHALE

1. Tilt your pelvis back, emphasizing your tail. Your belly will round forward.
2. Pull your shoulders down and back.
3. Look up towards the ceiling (do not strain the front of your neck).

### EXHALE

1. Tilt your pelvis back, tucking your tailbone under. Your spine will round.
2. Pull your navel in towards your spine.
3. Curve your shoulders forward and take your gaze towards your belly, chin coming towards your chest.

Repeat each movement for five to 10 breaths.



## **Sun Salutation Arms**

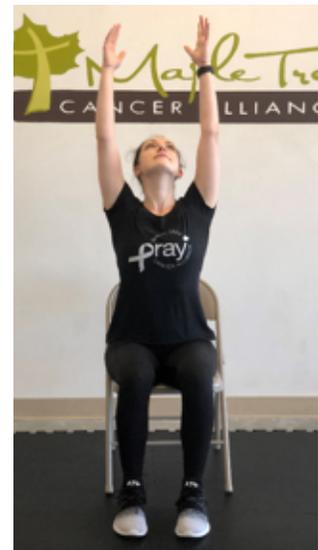
### INHALE

1. Anchor your "sit" bone into the chair, finding lift in the spine from those roots.
2. Lift your arms up, pressing your palms overhead.
3. Open space in the chest, and release tension in the shoulders, drawing the shoulder blades back and down.

### Exhale

1. Float the arms back down to your sides, releasing tension in the neck and shoulders.

Repeat sequence 5-10 times, focusing on keeping your breath controlled.



## **Forward Fold**

### INHALE

1. Elongate the spine, rooting through the tailbone and lengthening into the top of the head.
2. If you need to come out of this position, inhale to slowly roll back up to seated.

### EXHALE

1. Bend at the hips, letting the hands fall towards the feet. Chest relaxes to meet the knees.
2. With every breath out, release tension in the upper body, including the hands, neck, head and face.
3. Allow the upper body to hang like a rag doll over the lower body. Stay here for several breaths, allowing the low back to stretch and the hips to open if necessary.

If the hips allow, separate the knees and lower the upper body between them. The exhalation should always control this increase in your stretch, and only go as far as your body wants to go.



### **Extended Side Angle**

1. After your final forward bend, stay folded.
2. Bring your left fingertips to the floor on the outside of your left foot.

#### INHALE

1. Open your chest as you twist to the right on an inhale, bringing your right arm and gazing up at the ceiling. Hold here for several breaths.
2. If your left hand doesn't come easily to the floor, place a block under it or bring it to your left knee instead and twist from there.
3. If this twist is still difficult, modify with the photos provided. Take care not to twist too quickly, and immediately release from the position if it causes any back pain.

#### EXHALE

1. Bring the right arm down on an exhale.

Do the same position on the opposite side, with the right arm down and the left arm up.



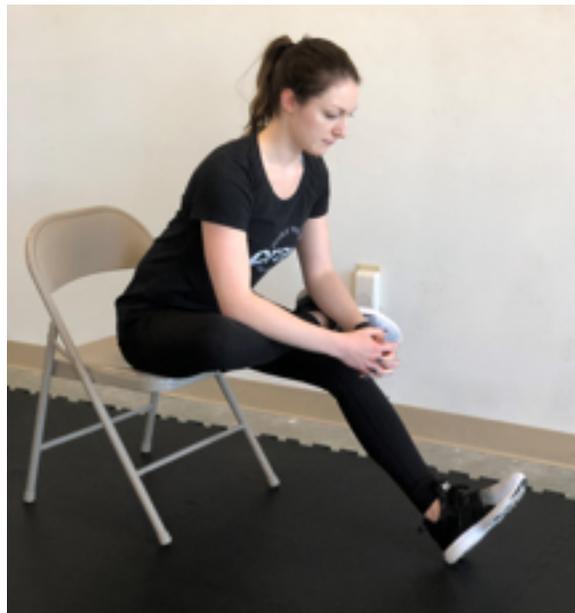
## **Chair Pigeon**

### INHALE

1. Elongate the spine by sitting up tall.
2. Bring your right ankle to rest on your left thigh, keeping the knee in line with your ankle as much as possible.
3. If it is too difficult to cross your right leg over your left, straighten your left knee a bit.

### EXHALE

1. You may forward bend to intensify the stretch if you like, exhaling to guide the movement. Keep the back flat and lean forward from the hips. Repeat with the left leg.
2. To make this stretch deeper, lean further forward, or give the inside of the knee slight pressure towards the floor.
3. Hold this chair pigeon for three to five breaths.



### **Chair Eagle:**

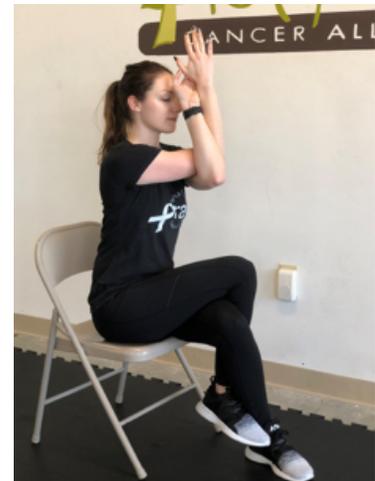
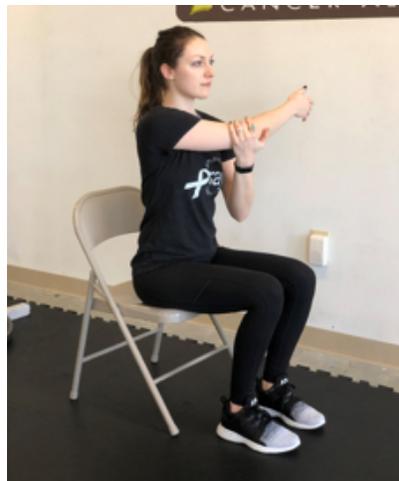
1. Hold your hands in front of you, bending both elbows. Cross one elbow over the other, attempting to twist your arms around each other. Bring the palms together if possible.
2. This stretch can be modified by reaching one arm across the chest, and hugging it into your torso with the other arm.
3. A stretch should be felt between the shoulder blades.

### **INHALE**

1. Reach the hands slightly higher, even as you draw the shoulders down and away from the ears.

### **EXHALE**

1. Relax the shoulders and neck, letting the shoulder blades drop down the back of the ribcage.
2. Hold this position for 3-5 breath cycles, then repeat on the opposite side.



Optional: Attempt a full eagle pose by also finding a twist in the legs. Cross your right leg over your left, and, if possible, wrap the right foot all the way around the left calf.



### **Chair Spinal Twist**

1. Come to sit sideways on the chair, facing towards the right side of the chair. Twist your torso to the right, holding onto the back of the chair to increase resistance for a spinal twist.
2. Start slow! You can always increase the depth of your stretch as you breathe.

INHALE

1. Lengthen the spine.

EXHALE

1. Twist slightly further to the right, attempting to look past the right shoulder. Relax the shoulders.
  2. This breath out should always control your motion into a deeper twist if necessary.
- Repeat for 5 breaths, then perform the same motions on the opposite side.



### **Chair Warrior I**

1. Begin in a seated position on the side of the chair, facing the right side. Keep your right leg in this bent position, as you swing your left leg around to the side of the chair.
  - a. Take your type moving your rear leg around the chair. If the initial position is too much, slowly work on opening up your hips, beginning with the legs at a ninety-degree angle as shown in the second photo.
2. Plant the sole of the left foot on the floor parallel to the seat of the chair. Push the entire foot, including all 5 toes into the ground and keep the left leg straight.
3. Square your hips forward in line with the seat of the chair. Your torso will continue to face over your right leg as you inhale to raise your arms towards the ceiling. Keep one arm on the chair for balance if needed.
4. Hold for three to five breath cycles, then continue into Warrior II.



To increase the difficulty of this position, or the muscular engagement, push both feet into the floor and attempt to raise the body out of the chair. Hold for a few seconds and then release.



## Chair Warrior II

1. Keeping the same lower body position as in Warrior I, exhale to open up the arms, lowering them to shoulder height. The right arm will come forward, and the left arm will come back.
2. Draw the left hip back and turn the torso to the left, opening up the hips. The shoulders and hips should now be aligned with the front of the chair.
3. Gaze out beyond your right fingertips, keeping the chest high and the shoulders low. Push into the floor with all four corners of both feet to maintain stability.
4. Hold for 3-5 breath cycles, then repeat on the opposite side.

To increase the difficulty of this position, or the muscular engagement, push both feet into the floor and attempt to raise the body out of the chair. Hold for a few seconds and then release.



### **Final Relaxation – Chair Savasana**

1. Take a few moments at the end of your practice to sit your with eyes closed, and your hands in your lap.
2. Slow your breathing and focus on the sensations you are feeling right now, in this moment (ex: how the chair feels, any noises you might be hearing from outside, or in the next room, or even what the air flow in the room feels like).
3. Every exhale should release tension from your muscles, including your face and eyes. Sit up tall, lengthening your neck, and let your shoulders fall away from your ears.  
\*If you have the ability to lay on the floor, propping the feet onto the chair at a 90 degree angle will release tension from your lower back during your savasana. Repeat the same cues as above, releasing muscle tension and slowing the breath.
4. Once you have finished several minutes in savasana clearing your mind, awaken slowly by finding small motions in your joints. Move towards your core from your extremities, starting with fingers and toes, and moving into larger joints like your hips and shoulders.
  - a. Example: wiggling fingers and toes, rocking knees from side to side, rolling shoulder or neck, rubbing the jaw or temples
5. Keep your eyes closed as you perform these motions, deepening your breaths once again. Open your eyes when you are ready to completely awaken, completing your savasana.

