



## Wrist Therapy

Saturday July 23rd 1:30-3:30pm  
 - Workshop With James Bryan -



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# WHEN YOUR WRISTS HURT

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By YJ Editor | Jul 11, 2013



In almost every class at least one student mentions problems with wrist pain. Usually the pain is associated with some repetitive activity, and often they are sitting at a computer for a good portion of their workday. Sometimes there are other factors at play, such as driving a lot, or using tools at the construction site or in the garden. On rarer occasions, some trauma, like an unexpected fall, may have set off pain in the wrists and into the hands.

In many cases, it's related to the carpal tunnel, the small passageway at the palm side of the wrist that contains the median nerve and nine tendons that bend your fingers. When the tendons that form the tunnel get irritated and inflamed, like from overuse or injury, the nerve becomes compressed, and it leads to pain, numbness, tingling, and even loss of strength in the hand. Sometimes the pain travels from the hand up the forearm toward the elbow. This is called Carpal Tunnel Syndrome (CTS).

A study done in 1999 and reported in the Journal of the American Medical Association, looked at yoga as a treatment for CTS and found to be potentially beneficial. The poses taught focused on increased openness in the chest, neck, and shoulders, such as Urdhva Hastasana, or Upward Salute.

Over the years, I have worked with lots of students on creating modified yoga practices that work toward the same goals, as well as teaching students ways to modify the hands when they are called upon in yoga asana to bear weight. The standing poses are particularly helpful in improving range of motion at the shoulder and arms, improving overall posture and strengthening and moving the head and neck around. The Warrior poses are particularly helpful. Poses that require the bottom hand for support, such as Trikonasana, can use fingertips or fists on a block or the floor to keep the wrist in a more neutral alignment.

During a period of acute pain, a student with CTS might need to avoid weight-bearing poses for a while, even the ubiquitous Downward Dog. But as symptoms improve, adding back a pose or two at a time that does challenge the wrists to be both strong and in full extension, like Plank Pose, could be a reasonable goal.

On rare occasions, a student will come to me with wrist pain that seems to have developed because of their yoga practice. Usually the student did not take time to progress slowly enough to let the wrists develop the strength and flexibility required of more advanced hand-weight-bearing poses, such as Handstand and Crow (or Crane) Pose. Or, they suddenly increased the frequency of classes that they attended that depended heavily on such poses, like the Ashtanga primary series.

Advising these students to dial it back for a while, and addressing the wrists just like the students with CTS above, can help the wrists heal and allow for a smart return to their previous practice.



# WHY YOU SHOULDN'T DOWNDOG WITH CARPAL TUNNEL SYNDROME

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**By Dario Fredrick**

**I have students with carpal tunnel syndrome who insist on doing Downward Dog and similar poses on their fists. Is this a good idea? If not, how should they modify their poses?**

**—Julie Gengo, Encinitas, California**

Students with repetitive stress injuries should minimize pressure on their hands; otherwise, the irritated tissues never get a chance to heal. So I don't think it's a good idea to practice Downward Dog, Upward Dog, Plank, and other such poses on the fists. This approach may be less painful than practicing on the palms, but it won't eliminate the strain. In addition, practicing with closed fists exacerbates tension in the shoulders and upper back, which can contribute to the problem.

Many people think these injuries are a localized problem caused by overuse of the hands and wrists. But the damage usually stems from both overuse *and* a chronic postural imbalance.

When you sit for hours at a computer, for example, you tend to draw your head forward and round your shoulders and upper spine. The muscles of the upper back constantly fight against these tendencies, becoming chronically tight and fatigued.

In dealing with carpal tunnel and similar conditions, I've found it to be extremely helpful to release the muscles of the upper back and realign the spine in its natural curves. Making fists has the opposite effect: It tightens the area between the upper thoracic spine and the tops of the shoulder blades, intensifying the muscular and energetic congestion that may have originally contributed to the injury.

Have your students modify their Downward Dog by practicing the pose with wall ropes around the upper thighs; this reduces pressure on their hands while still allowing effective work in the shoulders and upper back.

If wall ropes aren't available, ask your students to partner up; a yoga buddy can produce a similar effect by drawing back on the ends of a strap placed across the top of the student's thighs. (The student shouldn't return the favor; people with repetitive stress injuries should avoid grasping a strap like this.)

Students with neither wall ropes nor a yoga buddy can make a loop with a yoga strap, wrap it around both knobs of an open door, step inside the loop, and practice Downward Dog with the strap at the top of the thighs.

# SATYANANDA YOGA

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## Hand & Wrist Flexibility Warm Up

### **Mushtika Bandha** (hand clenching)

Standing in Mountain Pose.

Hold both arms straight in front of the body at shoulder level.

Open the hands, palms down, and stretch the fingers as wide apart as possible.

Close the fingers to make a tight fist with the thumbs inside.

The fingers should be slowly wrapped around the thumbs.

Repeat 10 times.

Inhale on opening the hands. Exhale on closing the hands.

### **Mandibandha Naman** (wrist bending)

Standing in Mountain Pose.

Stretch the arms in front of the body at shoulder level.

Keep the palms open and fingers straight throughout the entire practice.

Bend the hands backwards from the wrists as if pressing the palms against a wall with the fingers pointing toward the ceiling.

Bend the hands forward from the wrists so that the fingers point toward the floor.

Keep the elbows straight throughout the practice.

Do not bend the knuckle joints or fingers.

Bend the hands up again for the next round.

Repeat 5 times open fingers. Repeat 5 times closes fingers.

Inhale with the backward movement. Exhale with the forward movement.

### **Mandibandha Chakra** (wrist joint rotation)

Standing in Mountain Pose.

Stage 1: Extend the right arm forward at shoulder level.

Make a fist with the right hand, with the thumb inside.

The left hand is placed on the right hip.

This is the starting position.

Slowly rotate the fist about the wrist, ensuring that the palm faces downward throughout the rotation.

The arms and elbows should remain perfectly straight and still.

Make as large a circle as possible.

Practice 10 times clockwise and 10 times counter-clockwise.

Repeat the same with the left fist.

Stage 2: Extend both arms in front of the body with the first clenched.

Keep the arms straight and at shoulder level.

Rotate the fists together in the same direction.

Practice 10 times in each direction.

Stage 3: Practice as in stage 2.

Rotate the first together in the opposite direction.

Practice 10 times in each direction.



## FEATURED SEQUENCE: WRIST FLOSSING FOR WRIST CARE

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In Baxter's post on wrist, he recommended a wrist "flossing" sequence developed by Tom Alden that was featured in Timothy McCall's book *Yoga As Medicine*. This is a wonderful sequence you can do if you over-worked your wrists doing yoga, have wrist problems, such as carpal tunnel syndrome, or just want to give your hands and wrists a break during a marathon typing session. There are three different "flossing" movements:

**1. Palms Down.** Start by interlacing your fingers and turning your palms to face the ground. Move your elbows out the sides, so both arms are parallel to the floor. Gently pull your wrists apart, so you feel a slight traction, then raise your right arm and lower your left, bringing your right wrist into a forward bend and your left wrist into a backbend. Allow your right arm to do all the work, while your left arm is passive.



Repeat the movement on the other side by using your left arm to do all the work while your right arm is passive. Go back and forth any number of times.

**2. Palms Facing You.** Start by interlacing your fingers and turning your palms in to face the ground. Move your elbows out the sides, so both arms are parallel to the floor. Now turn your palms inward, to face you. Gently pull your wrists apart, so you feel a slight traction, then move your right arm outward and your left inward, bringing your right wrist into a forward bend and your left wrist into a backbend. Allow your right arm to do all the work, while your left arm is passive.



Repeat the movement on the other side by using your left arm to do all the work while your right arm is passive. Go back and forth any number of times.

**3. Palms Facing Away.** Start by interlacing your fingers and turning your palms to face the ground. Move your elbows out the sides, so both arms are parallel to the floor. Now turn your palms outward, so they face away from you. Gently pull your wrists apart, so you feel a slight traction, then move your right arm inward and your left outward, bringing your right wrist into a forward bend and your left wrist into a backbend. Allow your right arm to do all the work, while your left arm is passive.



Repeat the movement on the other side by using your left arm to do all the work while your right arm is passive. Go back and forth any number of times.

## PRINCIPLE OF PRACTICE NUMBER 6 - BANDHAS

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These are domes or arches within the body used to collect, store or transmit energy. The essential aspect of a Bandha is that of lifting energy upwards and their activation makes the yoga postures lighter - we are drawing up the rebounding energy from the Earth.

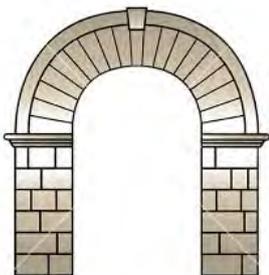
The effect is felt as if lifting yourself up from the inside. Bandhas are also used to provide structural support and therefore protection, by firming up the body through co-activation of opposing muscle groups crossing a joint complex.

Imagine a tea cup turned upside down and pressed into the yoga mat. The rim of the cup is actively pressed evenly down or earthed. From the grounding energy of earth, the rebounding energy returns/rises and is further enhanced or turbo-charged by contracting the rim or periphery inwards towards the centre of gravity - the effect being a stronger lifting action. The activation of the bandhas requires sustained muscular contraction, which generates heat. This heat helps to warm the body and contributes towards flexibility.

Compare this action to a cyclone; the periphery is drawn inwards towards the 'eye of the cyclone' and whatever enters it, is drawn vigorously upwards. Cyclonic energy is strong enough to lift cars and whole houses for hundreds of metres into the air.

This is also how hail is created. The upward drawing energy lifts rain to higher altitudes, where it is colder and the water freezes and falls back to the earth. The tea cup is a dome or arch and in the body we find these structures in the hands, feet, and pelvis, and lower/upper thoracic diaphragms.

**In yoga postures we use five Bandhas: Mula, Uddiyana (minor), Jalandhara, Hasta and Pada:**



***Mula Bandha*** - is the contraction of the pelvic floor muscles, initiated from the perineum, but also including the anus and urogenital area. Think of an inverted hammock (a dome).

Mula Bandha is activated with the first inhalation of the practice and maintained until lying down in relaxation. It assists in stabilization of the lower spine and also in elongating the spine.

***Uddiyana Bandha (minor)*** - is the contraction of the lower abdomen, from the top of the pubic bone to approximately three fingers below the navel. This is felt as a scooping in or hollowing of the lower belly. It assists in stabilizing the lower back and in elongating the spine. Like Mula, Uddiyana minor is activated at the beginning of practice and maintained until relaxation. In the Kriyas, or cleansing actions, we activate Mula Bandha (major) and draw up the whole abdominal region.

***Jalandhara Bandha*** - flex the neck to place the chin on the jugular notch. It is used in specific asana and Pranayama, e.g. Salamba Sarvangasana (Shoulder-stand), Dandasana (Staff), Breath Retention (Antara and Bahya Kumbhaka).

**Hasta Bandha (major)** - is the spreading of the hand and then contracting inwards to increase the arch in the palm. An arch or dome is stronger than a horizontal plane. Enhancing the natural arch of the palm increases its supporting action for the weight of the body and provides protection to the joints in the hand and arms as well. Used any time the hand is placed on the floor or wall as the foundation, in order to protect the joints in the hand, wrist, elbow and shoulder, or in postures where the hand action supports the energetic action of the asana, e.g. Extended Side Angle Pose (Utthita Parsvakonasana – Beginner Level), Supine Spinal Twist (Supta Parivrtta Merudandasana), or Half Cross Pose (Ardha Jathara Parivartanasana).



**Hasta Bandha (minor)** – is the same doming of the arch in the hand, but with closed fingers. It is activated anytime the fingers are sealed together, e.g. Mountain Pose (Tadasana), Upward Hands (Urdhva Hastasana), and Warrior 2 (Virabhadrasana 2).

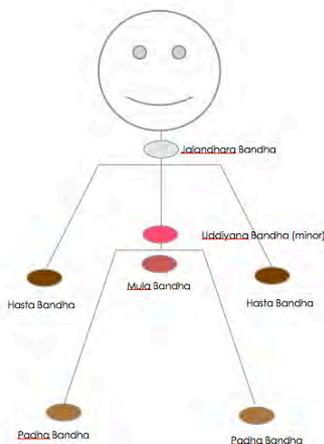


**Pada Bandha (major)** - is the spreading of the foot and then contracting inwards to increase the 3 arches in the foot (inner, outer and transverse). The same actions apply to Pada as in Hasta and it is used anytime the foot is on the floor or wall as the foundation.

**Pada Bandha (minor)** – is the same doming of the arch in the foot and is used with Dorsi Flexion or Plantar Flexion of the foot

During Pranayama, Mula and Uddiyana (minor) are always activated. Jalandhara needs to be activated anytime there is breath retention, on either the inhalation or exhalation. Hasta and Pada are not utilized in Pranayama.

Uddiyana (major) or the complete contraction of the whole abdominal area can only be activated when the lungs are empty. Therefore it is not used during asana, but only during breath retentions in Pranayama.



## PROGRESSIVE PLANKS – FOR DEVELOPING CORE STRENGTH

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### **Warm Up:**

Kneeling on hands and knees, with hands under shoulders and knees under hips

With straight arms, apply Hasta Bandha, Co-Activation and Spiralic Action

Reverse hands – adjust intensity by walking knees forwards (less intense) or backwards (more intense)

Alternative – hands on wall

### **High Plank:**

Standing upright – hands on wall

Incline – hands on bench, with knees (2 then 1) on floor

Incline – hands on bench, with straight legs

Prone – hands on floor and feet against wall

Alternative – forearms instead of hands

### **Low Plank:**

Standing upright – hands on wall

Incline – hands on bench, with knees (2 then 1) on floor

Incline – hands on bench, with straight legs

Prone – hands on floor, with straight legs and feet against wall

Note: use 2 or 1 bent knees to reduce weight/effort

Alternative – forearms instead of hands

## Wall-Walk Plank:

### (1) Lift Off

Assume a plank position with the soles of your feet pressed against a wall.

Tighten your core but keep your breathing relaxed.

Hold for 10 seconds

### (2) Step Up

Now walk your feet up until you are at a 45 degree angle.

Squeeze your glutes to lengthen your lumbar spine.

Aim to keep your core engaged.

Hold for 10 seconds

### (3) Walk On

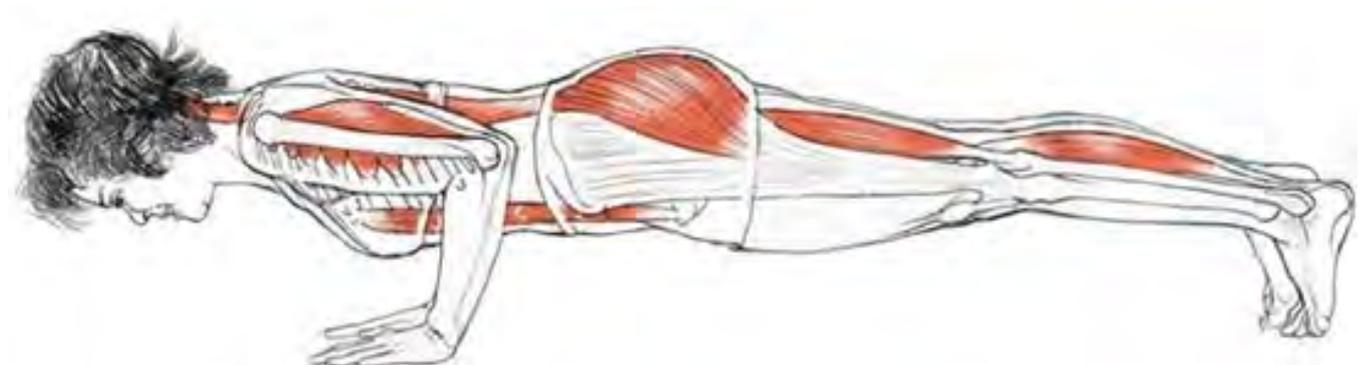
Walk your feet up and hands in all the way up , toes just touching the wall – close to a handstand position.

Keep your shoulders broad and away from the ears.

Hold for 10 seconds.

### (4) Go Low

Walk back down, hitting each stage again for another 10 seconds each.



## YOGA THERAPY FOR OPEN SHOULDERS – 4 ARM POSITIONS

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### 1: Position One

Standing in Mountain Pose with the right hand on the wall

Hasta Bandha and shoulder in line with hand

Place left hand on top of right shoulder to monitor its movement (none)

Rotate the arm/shoulder joint so the biceps turns up and then the triceps turns up

30 seconds to 1 minute

### 2: Position Two

Standing in Mountain Pose with right hand on the wall

Hasta Bandha and shoulder in line with hand

Walk inwards and reverse your feet

Lift the left forearm up and place as a brace just above the right elbow

Keep the right arm straight – hand active, and pull down the right shoulder blade

30 seconds to 1 minute

### 3: Position Three

Standing in Mountain Pose with the right hand on the wall

Hasta Bandha and shoulder in line with the hand

Walk outwards, keeping your right shoulder down

Keep your shoulder in line with the hand

Do not lose the Hasta Bandha hand on the wall

30 seconds to 1 minute

#### 4: Position Four

Standing in Mountain Pose with the right hand on the wall

Walk inwards with your right foot and hip, placing them against the wall and lifting your right hand as high as possible

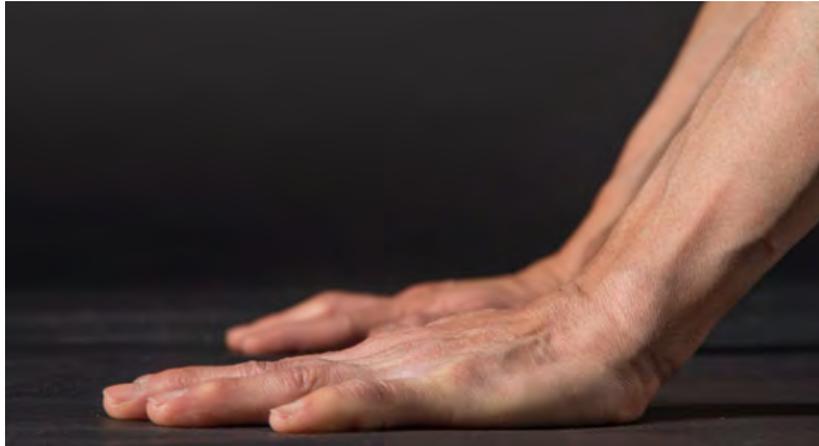
Endeavour to open the shoulder joint and flatten your armpit against the wall

30 seconds to 1 minute

REPEAT ON THE LEFT SIDE

# LEARN HOW TO PROTECT YOUR WRISTS IN YOUR PRACTICE

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By Ray Long, MD | Mar 27, 2015

**By nature, our wrists are particularly prone to injury. Learn how you can protect them in your yoga practice.**

If your yoga practice involves moving into and out of Downward-Facing Dog Pose and Chaturanga Dandasana, wrist pain may be a current or looming problem. I teach workshops internationally to teachers and students who are serious about improving their practices, and about 25 percent of my students admit to wrist pain during vinyasa. And when you explore the anatomy of the wrists, it's easy to see how these vulnerable structures might easily suffer from improper weight transfer and repetitive movement.

## **Wrist Anatomy**

Your wrists have a lot of moving parts. They start where your two forearm bones, the radius and ulna, meet with three of the eight carpal bones on each hand. The rest of the carpal bones connect with each other and the fingers. An array of ligaments connects the many bones to each other, and muscles and tendons lie above and below the bones to move the wrist and fingers.

## **Common Wrist Injuries**

With all this complexity, misalignments in bones, ligaments, and muscles during weight-bearing poses are bound to happen, which can trigger wrist pain and two common conditions in particular. The first, called ulno-carpal abutment syndrome, indicates pressure where the ulna meets the carpal bones on the little-finger side of the wrist. This may occur if the ulna bone has an unusual shape—something just a small percentage of us are born with—or if the wrist is repeatedly turned out toward the little finger in weight-bearing poses like Downward-Facing Dog.

The second syndrome, tendonitis, is characterized by tendon inflammation, often due to misalignment and weight transfer in poses such as Chaturanga Dandasana, where the wrist joint is in full extension. Chronic wrist injury is also common in yogis with relaxed or hyper-mobile ligaments, which can cause inflammation, pain, and ultimately arthritis.

## **The Surprising Secret to Protecting Your Wrists**

The key to protecting your wrists is—surprise! —A strong core. Evidence-based medicine demonstrates that a strong core can increase the efficiency of the rotator cuff muscles. These muscles stabilize the shoulders and can thus decrease the load that is transferred to your wrists. On the flip side, low core strength or failure to engage the core in poses like Chaturanga Dandasana can lead to decreased trunk and shoulder stability. If the core is weak, strong shear forces transfer across the wrist, especially during transitions between poses. So picture the ubiquitous Down Dog-Chaturanga-Up Dog-Down Dog sequence. Each time you repeat it, your wrists bear weight throughout. Over time and without proper support, this can lead to the injuries described above. But when effort is well dispersed throughout the core and shoulders in a vinyasa-based practice, that force in the wrists is minimized.

### **1. Strengthen Your Core: Happy Baby Pose, variation**

**This variation will wake up your core.**

Lie on your back with your head about one foot away from the wall, feet toward the center of the room. Raise your arms overhead with your elbows bent and place your palms against the wall, fingers pointing down. Flex the hips and knees to 90 degrees in reverse tabletop position. On an exhalation, use the abdominals to straighten your right knee and lower your right foot toward the floor. Bring the foot back up and repeat on the left side. Do 10 rounds.

### **2. Strengthen Your Core: Bridge Pose, variation**

**Strengthen your gluteal muscles while you energize your core with this gentle backbend.**

Begin on your back with your feet slightly wider than your hips and about 4-6 inches away from your buttocks. Let your arms rest on the floor, palms down. Press your hands and feet into the floor. Gently attempt to drag the feet apart without movement. Keep the knees over the heels, engage the gluteus maximus, press into the feet, and exhale to raise the hips. Inhale to lower the hips and back all the way to the floor. Begin with 2-3 sets of 10 repetitions, eventually building to 20 repetitions each set. Rest between each set.

### **3. Strengthen Your Core: Forearm Plank**

**Forearm Plank will strengthen your abdominal core in concert with your gluteus maximus muscles.**

Start lying down with your forearms on the floor, elbows under your shoulders. Lift your whole body so that it forms a straight line from head to heels. Attempt to drag your forearms toward your feet without movement, while contracting your gluteus maximus slightly to move your tailbone toward your heels. Continue to breathe at your resting pace and hold for 10 seconds. Exhale to lower. Repeat 2-3 times.

### **4. Activate Your Rotator Cuffs: Cow-Face Pose Arms**

**Use this stretch to wake up your rotator cuffs.**

**PART I:** Reach your right arm up and bend your elbow so that your fingertips point down your back. Reach your left arm behind your back with fingertips pointing up. Use a belt to bridge the distance between the hands. Focus on one arm at a time. Press the knuckles of the right hand

into the back, using less than 20 percent effort. Hold 8 to 10 seconds. Then gently pull down on the belt with the left hand to deepen the stretch in the right shoulder. Hold for 30 seconds. Switch sides and repeat with the left elbow pointing up.

**PART II:** Switch the arms again, with the right on top, but this time focus on your left arm. Gently pull the belt with the right hand to draw the left hand up the back. Once you reach a comfortable stretch, draw the left shoulder back and down. Gently press the knuckles of the left hand into the back. Hold 8 to 10 seconds. Then use the belt to draw the hand a bit farther up the back. Hold the entire stretch for 30 seconds and then switch sides. Repeat 3 rounds each of parts I and II.

## **5. Activate Your Rotator Cuffs: Eagle Pose Arms**

**This stretch improves the strength and flexibility of your rotator cuffs using eccentric contractions, which gently increase tension as muscles lengthen.**

Sit or stand. Cross your right arm under your left and wrap your forearms around each other. Gradually raise your elbows to shoulder height and draw your left arm toward the right side to enhance the stretch. Gently press your left elbow into the right. Use less than 20 percent effort and hold for 8-10 seconds. Then return your elbows to shoulder height and bring your arms back to center. Hold for 20 seconds, before starting over on the other side. Repeat for 3 rounds.

NOTE: If you have an injury or chronic shoulder condition, seek the advice of your physician before attempting Garudasana.

## **6. Activate Your Rotator Cuffs: Warrior II Pose**

**Use Warrior II to create stability in your shoulders.**

From Tadasana (Mountain Pose), step the feet about three to four feet apart. Turn your right foot out 90 degrees and bring your other foot parallel with the back of the mat, then turn the left toes in just slightly. Align your right heel with your left arch. Turn your right thigh out and bend the right knee until it is over the right ankle. Press down through the left leg and outer left heel. Raise your arms to shoulder height and reach out through extended fingers, palms up. Draw the shoulder blades toward the midline and down the back. Roll the shoulders back. Flip the palms down. Hold for about a minute before switching sides.

## **7. Stabilize Your Wrists: Child's Pose**

**Connecting your rotator cuffs with your wrists in this pose strengthens the wrists themselves.**

Come into Child's Pose with your knees hip-width apart or together; rest your sitting bones on your heels and extend your arms on the floor in front of you, palms down. Roll your shoulders out and draw your shoulder blades down your back to engage your rotator cuffs. Keep your wrists straight—don't deviate to the little finger side. Gently press the mounds at the bases of your fingers into the mat. Note that your wrists lift slightly. This aligns your carpal bones with your radius and ulna. Maintain lift during exhalation and relax on inhalation. You can add very gentle pressure with your fingertips and a slight gripping action with your thumbs, directed toward the little fingers to further stabilize your wrists. Hold for 5 breaths. Inhale to sit up and stretch your right wrist into extension, holding your palm up and gently pulling your fingers

back toward your wrist with the other hand. Hold for 30 seconds then stretch the left wrist for 30 seconds.

## 8. Integrate All Actions In Downward-Facing Dog Pose

From Child's Pose, press the mounds at the bases of your fingers into the mat to stabilize and slightly lift your wrists. Roll your shoulders out and draw your shoulder blades down your back. Inhale to lift your hips. On an exhalation, sink your heels toward the floor and feel the muscles of your abdomen engage by drawing your belly toward your spine. Contract your quadriceps to straighten your knees. Finally, attempt to lift the tops of your feet toward your shins, draw your body back toward your heels, and further stabilize your core.



## WRIST RELIEF: 6 POSES FOR RSI (REPETITIVE STRESS INJURY)

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If you have carpal tunnel, tendonitis, or other forms of RSI, these poses will stabilize your shoulders and upper back and relieve pain in your wrists.



Our hands are one of our primary organs of action—we use them for basic survival, recreation, communication, even creative expression. An injury in the hand or wrist can be debilitating and the healing process elusive. Because many of our interactions with modern conveniences involve repetitive movements—such as typing, texting, or mousing—one of the most prevalent types of wrist ailment today is a repetitive strain/stress injury, or RSI. Many common wrist conditions, such as carpal tunnel syndrome and tendinitis of the wrist, fall under this category.

RSIs stem from excessive and continuous stress on the musculoskeletal system, often brought on by poor postural habits, as well as workplace ergonomics. When the shoulders and upper back don't provide a supportive structural base for arm movements, the burden of the activity may fall on the smaller joints. Furthermore, poor alignment in the shoulders and upper back can constrict nerves in the arms, which can manifest as pain, swelling, and numbness in the wrists.

Yoga helps us engage in our daily activities in a less stressful and harmful manner. First, we address the causes of injury by slowing down and observing ourselves and our habitual patterns. Then we can develop new patterns that are healthier and more conscious. Specifically, yoga can assist with healing RSI in the wrists by working on alignment in the upper body, so that the larger muscles in this region can better support and guide movements of the elbows, wrists, and hands.

The following asanas will help to develop mobility and strength in the shoulders and upper back to minimize nerve compression and stress on the smaller joints. In all of these poses, the upper trapezius muscles (which attach at the base of the skull and run down the neck to attach at the clavicles) should feel like they are releasing down the back, so that there is no congestion near the base of the neck, and the sides of the neck are free to lengthen. This aids in counteracting the imbalances of the typical slumped forward posture many of us assume in front of the computer, in which the shoulders are pulled forward and down, the tops of the trapezius muscles become hard and creep up toward the skull, and the head projects forward.

We'll begin the sequence with the wrists in a neutral position, and work toward safely bringing the wrists into greater degrees of extension and, eventually, weight bearing positions. Regular practice of these poses progressively prepares the upper body for asanas that are more challenging to shoulders, elbows, and wrists, such as chaturanga dandasana (four-limbed staff pose), or adho mukha vrikshasana (handstand).

### I. Urdhva Hastasana (Upward Hands Pose)



Stand with your back against a wall in *tadasana*. Separate your feet hip-width apart and parallel to each other, a couple of inches away from the wall. Bring the weight back into the heels of your feet and lengthen the buttocks down the wall so that you don't arch your lower back. Lift the front and sides of your torso and open the chest. Roll the outermost corners of your shoulders back against the wall so that you can feel your chest broaden.

With your arms straight, extend them in front of you, parallel to the floor, with palms facing each other. Pull your shoulders back into the wall to bring the shoulder blades down the back. Then raise your arms overhead; your hands may or may not reach the wall, depending on the range of motion in your shoulders. Keep your arms firm and straight, and as you reach them toward the ceiling, release your shoulders and shoulder blades down the wall. Extend the side ribs up toward the hands without moving your lower back, thighs, and waist away from the wall.

Repeat the pose, this time bringing the arms up from the sides, focusing your attention on the rotation of the upper arms and shoulders. Extend your arms straight out to the sides in line with your shoulders, palms facing down. Extend the inner edges of the arms from the center of your chest until you feel the biceps lengthening toward your wrists. Lift the sides of your chest, rotate your upper arms out from the shoulders, and turn the palms to face the ceiling.

This rotation should feel like it is originating from your shoulder blades moving down, in, and forward toward your chest. Raise the arms overhead as you roll the triceps forward away from the wall and the biceps back toward the wall. Lift the outer edges of your armpits toward your fingers, and, without dropping the arms, release the trapezius muscles away from your ears. Exhale and lower your arms down by your sides into *tadasana*.

## 2. Urdhva Baddhanguliyasana (Upward Bound Fingers Pose)



In the first variation of this pose, we'll focus on how to extend the arms without tightening the trapezius muscles. From *tadasana*, interlock your fingers snugly at the webbing and rest the backs of your hands on top of your head with palms facing up. Release the tops of the trapezius muscles down your back, away from your neck, as you begin to straighten your arms toward the ceiling. The moment you find that the top trapezius muscles tighten (even if only on one side), pause and allow them to soften before proceeding further. Rather than tightening the shoulders to straighten the arms, see if you can hug the bones of the upper arms with the triceps. Exhale, unclasp the hands, and release the arms down by your sides.

Now repeat the pose, focusing on opening the sides of the chest and stretching the fingers and wrists. Change the interlock of your fingers so that the opposite index finger is on top. (Don't worry if this feels awkward.) Bring the backs of your clasped hands to your chest, and slowly stretch your arms straight out in front of you, parallel to the floor. Push out through the base of the fingers and broaden the heels of the hands. Make the outer arms firm, and straighten the arms until you feel the inner arms stretch.

Keep the arms completely straight, and raise them overhead. As you lift the wrists higher toward the ceiling, raise the sides of your rib cage and open the armpits, spreading and lifting them toward the hands. Open the palms of the hands wide and try taking your hands further back, so that the arms come beside or even behind your ears. As you bring the arms further back, move your shoulder blades and upper back forward toward your chest without pushing your bottom ribs and lower back forward. Keep your arms straight and firm, and without lowering the palms, release your trapezius muscles down. Exhale, unclasp the hands, and bring the arms forward and down by your sides back into *tadasana*.

## 3. Ardha Parshva Hastasana (Half Sideways Hand Pose)



Stand in *tadasana*, one arm's distance away from a wall, with your left side parallel to the wall. Place the palm of your left hand on the wall in line with your shoulder, and turn the hand out so

that the middle finger is pointing behind you. (If you find this challenging on your wrist, you can point your fingers up toward the ceiling.) With your left elbow slightly bent, turn the upper arm out (in the same direction as the hand) from the shoulder socket. Press the entire palm of the hand into the wall, including the bases of your fingers and all your finger pads; be especially aware of maintaining pressure through your index finger.

Move your left shoulder blade in, drop the left shoulder back and down away from your ear, and gently straighten your left arm as you turn your chest away from the wall. It should feel as if you are attempting to push the wall away from the center of your chest. Hold the pose for about two minutes, and repeat on the other side.



#### 4. Bhujangasana at the Wall (Cobra Pose Variation)

This standing version of bhujangasana gives you the benefits of the prone backbend—strengthening the upper back, relieving pressure in the shoulders and neck, and counteracting the forward bending of daily activities—without any weight on your wrists. Stand approximately six inches away from a wall and press your pubic bone against the wall; place your fingertips on the wall at shoulder height.

With straight legs, lift your heels high off the floor and draw your tailbone toward the wall. Open your chest, and roll your shoulders back away from the wall and down toward your buttocks. Draw the shoulder blades down and forward into the chest.

The bottom edges of the shoulder blades should feel like they are coming closer to each other as you lift the sides of the chest up. Lift your lower abdomen toward the top of your sternum and isometrically drag your fingers toward the floor, as if you're trying to pull the wall down with your fingertips. If your chest is open and your neck feels free, you can look upward. Hold the pose for one minute, or for as long as you feel strong and open; then rest and repeat.



### 5. Bharadvajasana I (Pose of Sage Bharadvaja)

Sit on two folded blankets and bring both feet to the outside of your left hip. Place the top of your left foot on the arch of the right foot, with the left toes pointing straight back and the right toes pointing to the left. Keep both knees pointing forward. If this is challenging for your knees, try sitting up on more support. Drop the left hip down so that the pelvis is level. Bend your right elbow, take your arm behind your back, and clasp your left upper arm with your right hand. Roll the right shoulder back. As you turn to the right, cross your left hand in front of you and place it as close to the outside edge of your right knee as you can reach. Inhale, and lift the sides of the chest; exhale, and turn your chest to the right. Keep rolling the right shoulder back as if the right arm and shoulder were leading the twist.

Keeping the chest broad and level, exhale, and turn your head to look to the right. Hold for 30 seconds; then return to centre on an exhale, release your legs, and change sides.

### 6. Hands and Knees Pose



Finally, we'll explore proper shoulder and arm alignment in a pose that places weight on the wrists. It is important to practice weight-bearing asanas on a firm surface (soft surfaces can cause the wrists to overextend) and to distribute the weight throughout the hand, so that you don't collapse onto the wrists.

Come onto your hands and knees with your hands under your shoulders and knees under your hips. Press the whole palm and all of the finger pads flat on the floor and lift the forearms up away from the wrist; it should feel like the skin on the palm of the hand is lengthening away from your wrist toward your fingertips. Straighten your arms, and turn your upper arms out. Roll your shoulders back away from your ears, spread the collarbones, and draw the upper arms up into the shoulder sockets.

# BROKEN WRIST THERAPY SESSION

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*Yogic Full Breath (and then synchronize all movement to match the breath)*

*Show: Co-activation of arms, Spiralic action of arms, Hasta Bandha*

Sun Salutation (arms only) x 3

Sun Salutation (forward bending) x 3

Mountain Pose

Side Mountain Pose

Side Angle Pose

Revolved Side Angle Pose

Standing Forward Bend

Plank Pose (on forearms)

Plank Pose (on forearms – one leg)

Seated Forward Bend

Hero Pose

Downward Facing Hero Pose

Reclining Spinal Twist

Sphinx Pose

Locust Pose

Bridge Pose

Shoulder Stand – Legs up wall

Relaxation 5 minutes

*To be continued...*

*Tree Pose*

*Warrior I Pose*

*Warrior II Pose*

*Imaginary Chair Pose*

*Head of Knee Pose*

*Easy Crossed Legs*

# NOTES

