

POSE OF THE MONTH  
September 2006

Janu Sirsasana B – Head to knee pose. Janu means knee, sirsa means head. This pose goes deeper than Janu Sirsasana A, and Janu Sirsasana A will help prepare your body for the B position.

Method

- ॐ From Downward facing dog, hop through to Dandasana beginning to fold your right leg back as you come through your arms.
- ॐ Exhaling bend your right knee putting your foot close to your groin and take your knee out to the side to approx. 85°. Then lift your hips up and slide forward to have a seat on your inner foot/heel. Your heel should be in your anal/perineal area (right where you don't think it should be!) and your left sitting bone will be into the arch of your right foot, flex or point your foot (which ever gets your heel to press up deeper into your perineum).
- ॐ Catch your left foot with both hands (bending your left knee if necessary), inhale lift your heart and square your shoulders over the left thigh adding a slight "twisting" component to the pose.
- ॐ Exhale forward bend over your left thigh moving your forehead to knee, spiral your right ribs inward trying to keep both shoulders parallel to the floor. Slide your shoulder blades down your back and lengthen your spine and back of your neck, paying attention to stay connected with the bandhas by pulling the ribs in and together but not rounding your upper back.
- ॐ Drishti (gaze) is toward your toes. Be careful not to put pressure on the nerves at the base of the skull by jutting your chin forward in effort to get more length in the pose or your head down. Instead resting your forehead on your knee (bending your knee if you need to do that to make forehead to knee contact) is important in this pose as it induces the relaxation response which is the reason we are doing this pose.
- ॐ Hold here for five deep breaths, the pressure of your heel in your "mula bandha" should remind you to lift mula bandha. Inhaling come up, take vinyasa or switch legs.



Janu Sirsasana B puts an even more intense stretch on the hamstrings due to the elevation of the hips. Progress intelligently, many people initially avoid going deep into forward bending with this posture giving the body time to accept the new range of motion it is being put into.

Benefits

The Janu Sirsasana series of poses has a powerful effect on the nervous system, digestive system, urinary system and prostate gland. Of importance is the pressure from the heel placed on the pelvic splanchnic nerve in Janu Sirsasana B which is the nerve that puts our body in a relaxed state, making us parasympathetic dominant.

Janu sirsasana B puts pressure on our pelvic splanchnic nerve with is connected to the parasympathetic nervous system, which calms our body and allows healing to happen. This is why yoga texts give so much relevance to the perineal area of our body, with statements such as janu sirsasana helps in rebuilding all our tissues, or our 7 dhatus which means tissues.



ॐ The 7 Dhatus - There are seven dhatu or tissues in the body known as sapta dhatu: blood, fat, flesh, bone, marrow, skin, semen/ova. To maintain these tissues, certain chemical hormones need to be produced, which the pancreas is involved in the production of — and can only happen when we are parasympathetic dominant. When these tissues are healthy, disease has a harder time taking hold of our body.

I discovered one of the many nerves to the pancreas is the pelvic splanchnic nerve (a splanchnic nerve is a nerve, parasympathetic OR sympathetic, that brings innervation to viscera; for example there is also a sacral splanchnic nerve that is connected to the sympathetic nervous system).

The pelvic splanchnic nerve has fibers from the rectum and bladder to the sacrum, the prostate, and to the pancreas. It regulates emptying the bladder and rectum, as well as sexual functions, remember the pelvic splanchnic nerves are connected to the parasympathetic nervous system. You can not do any of those above functions when you are stressed out . . .

### **It is important to relax, head to knee in Janu B!**

We do this pose to help get parasympathetic dominant so our body can heal and rebuild. If we are trying to get our leg straight or our chin to shin or our torso flat on our leg we are pretty much making the pose null and void.

RELAX and enjoy the posture, its ok to not work so hard all the time!

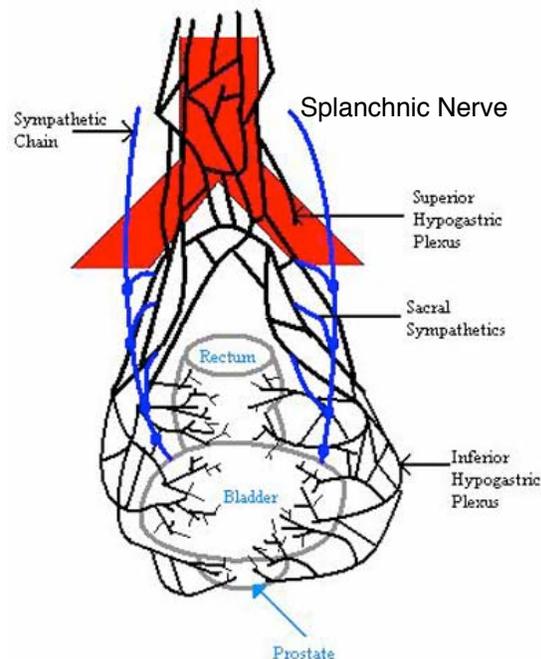
Janu Sirsasana B stimulates the splanchnic nerve in lowering stress hormones helping our body to digest and regenerate or rebuild the 7 tissues of the body — of which regulating the function of the pancreas is an important part of — and regulating the bladder, rectum, and sexual functions, which is stated in Yoga Mala and other yogic texts such as Asana, Pranayama, Mudra, & Bandha by the Bihar School of Yoga.

Another tie to Janu Sirsasana B is through the pressure from the heel on prostate in men (which also effects sexual functions).

Latest research shows that gentle massage of the prostate [by a urologist] — maybe even just sitting on your heel — may be beneficial by:

- ॐ helping to drain painfully sequestered secretions in a chronically inflamed prostate gland or seminal vesicles;
- ॐ by releasing the tension around nerve endings behind the prostate. This represents a form of "myofascial release".

<http://www.chronicprostatitis.com/massage.html>



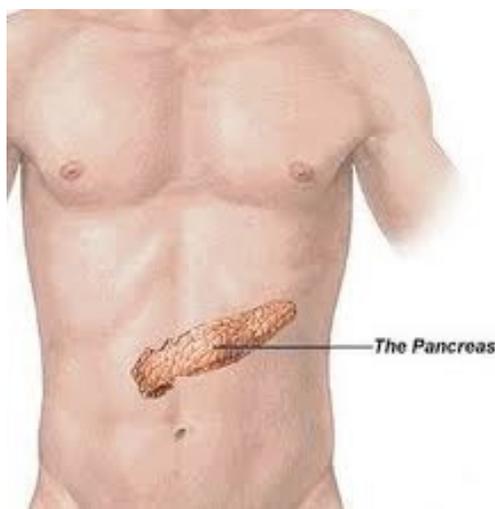
Since the Splanchnic nerve is attached to the rectum, placing your heel closer to your rectum would seem to be more direct pressure on the specific nerve to stimulate it.



There seem to be varying opinions on how to place your foot and heel (“pointed” (plantar flexion) or flexed (dorsi flexion) . . . whichever position makes your heel press further into your perineum would be the best foot/heel position for you.

## Learning about your pancreas through Janu Sirsasana A B & C

The Janu Sirsasana series is about the pancreas. We use the Janu Sirsasana series to press on various nerves that stimulate certain reactions from the pancreas.



### The Pancreas

The pancreas is a gland organ in the digestive and endocrine system. It is both an endocrine and exocrine gland.

**Endocrine means “in pouring” -- pouring hormones into our blood**, producing several important hormones, including insulin, glucagon, and somatostatin.

Learning about your body.. definition quiz this week ;)

**Glucagon** is the opposite of **Insulin** (insulin lowers blood glucose and for storing it) -- Glucagon raises our blood glucose levels to feed our muscles energy if are being active — or when our blood sugars fall too low. Glucagon stimulates the liver to covert stored glycogen into glucose which is released into our blood stream for energy.

**Somatostatin** secreted by the pancreas acts as a hormone that inhibits the secretion of insulin and glucagon, and reduces the activity of the digestive system in general. This is done by the body if we are stressed mentally, emotionally, or physically. Our energy is diverted from digestion to where our body needs it to “save” us from the stressor. What makes the difference of when your body secretes Glucagon or Somatostatin to get energy to your muscles? Your nervous system! When you are operating in your sympathetic nervous system instead of your parasympathetic nervous system somatostatin is released as growth hormone-inhibiting hormone that also stops some of the work of the endocrine system as well as the digestive system so our body has all there reserves it needs to handle the “emergency” at hand. Remember even if the emergency is only in your thoughts, this process is still happening.

Remember as a child being told to wait to swim a half hour after eating? This is why; if you exercise after eating your energy is diverted from digestion to your working muscles; leaving your food to sit and slosh around in your stomach creating heartburn, and discomfort as it putrefies.

The pancreas is also an **exocrine gland (exocrine means out-pouring, -- pouring through a gland to something outside of the blood)**, secreting pancreatic juices containing digestive enzymes to the small intestines. These powerful enzymes help breakdown carbohydrates, protein, and fat, improving digestion.



The pancreas also creates a bicarbonate solution to buffer the food from the stomach to the duodenum on its way to the small intestine. The pancreas is capable of two (and many other) distinctly different processes. The pancreas likes oppositional tasks!

The pancreas has two main functional components:

- endocrine, to produce insulin, glucagon, and somatostatin
- exocrine, to produce pancreatic juices for digestion and their buffering solution.

**The Pancreas has more nerves connected to it than any organ!** Nerves connected to the pancreas tie both to the parasympathetic (calming) and sympathetic (stimulating) nervous system . . . remember the pancreas likes oppositional tasks . . .

The pancreas is in direct contact with the stomach, duodenum, spleen, vagus nerve, splanchnic nerve, and other major vessels of the abdomen.

**The vagus nerve is an interesting connection to explore**, the vagus nerve connects a lot in our body! The vagus nerve connects to all five senses and the pancreas. When we see or smell food it triggers the vagus nerve to send impulses to the pancreas to prepare for digestion, so the pancreas starts the process of releasing insulin into our blood stream before any food touches our lips — it's a very forward thinking organ ;) This is why you get hungry you see or smell food.

Understanding nutrition science; let's take a look at fake sugars — this knowledge means that fake sugars are not only useless - but harmful. Your senses have told your pancreas (through the vagus nerve) that sweet food is coming and to go ahead and release insulin. So your body has already lowered your blood sugars expecting sugar — it does not get it if you ate fake sugars so now your blood sugar is impaired leaving you even hungrier than before and craving sugar . . . which makes you go seek sugary foods. Furthermore, fake sugars are neurotoxins and best avoided.

Understanding how your body works can improve your health!

**You don't want to be poking around on just any area of the pancreas.**

We are not actually trying to press on the pancreas with our heel as we do the other organs — the pancreas handles several oppositional functions -- from the production and release of insulin and somatostatin (which are oppositional) to the production and release of strong enzymes for digestion to a bicarbonate solution that neutralizes the acid as it leaves the stomach -- the digestive enzymes it creates are so acidic that if the pancreas were to rupture the acid would burn surrounding tissues. (In one book I read it referred to the pancreas as the P-bomb.) Instead we use our heel to press on nerves innervating the pancreas — of which there are many.

This is another example of why sugar substitutes are not effective . . . your body tastes sugar, thinks it's getting sugar so the pancreas prepares by sending out insulin (via communications through the vagus nerve), but then sugar does not come.

Because of the insulin release your blood sugar drops . . . Do you know what happens when your blood sugar drops? You get very hungry . . . suddenly you are craving sugar and heading for a snack . . . You can't fool the body.



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Furthermore, the position of the pancreas in our abdomen is a sign we don't want to mess with it. The pancreas is located behind the stomach and in front of the kidneys -- deep in the center of our body where it is well protected.

How does Janu Sirsasana do all the "things" that the yoga texts say?  
The yoga texts state that janu sirsasana can rebuild our seven tissues, blood, fat, flesh, bone, marrow, skin, semen/ova. Janu sirsasana can do this just by relaxing our nervous system and allowing healing and rebuilding to take place.

