



POSE OF THE MONTH

June 2006

Ardha Baddha Padma Paschimottanasana – half bound lotus intense west stretch (Ardha means half; Baddha means bound caught or restrained; padma means lotus; paschima means west; Uttana means intense.)

Forward bending with the foot in half lotus has a powerful effect on the liver and spleen. This is the purpose of forward bending with your heel pressing into your abdomen—to stimulate the liver and spleen.

Method

ॐ From Dandasana, place your right leg into the half lotus position, heel moving toward your navel, ankle on top of your left thigh and right knee moving toward left knee. Try to turn the sole of your foot upward as you bring your leg into half lotus, this will help to alleviate some twisting on the knee.



ॐ Reach around your back with your right hand and try to bind or catch your foot. If you can not catch your foot (keep coming back, sometimes we need to work externally on the hip joint before we can work internally on the organs ;) then take both hands out to your left foot.



ॐ With your left hand, catch the outer edge of your left foot if possible, inhale lift your head and extend your spine

ॐ Exhale forward bending, forehead or chin moving toward your knee or shin. Take five deep steady breaths here.

ॐ Inhale head up, exhale ground your hands, inhaling lift up for vinyasa or to switch your feet.



Note of caution regarding knees and hips, if you have knee problems half lotus needs to be approached very carefully. The lotus position puts a slight twist on the knee -- some may need to modify this position -- but do not try to push your knee down, this can put more twist on the knee causing pain.

Benefits

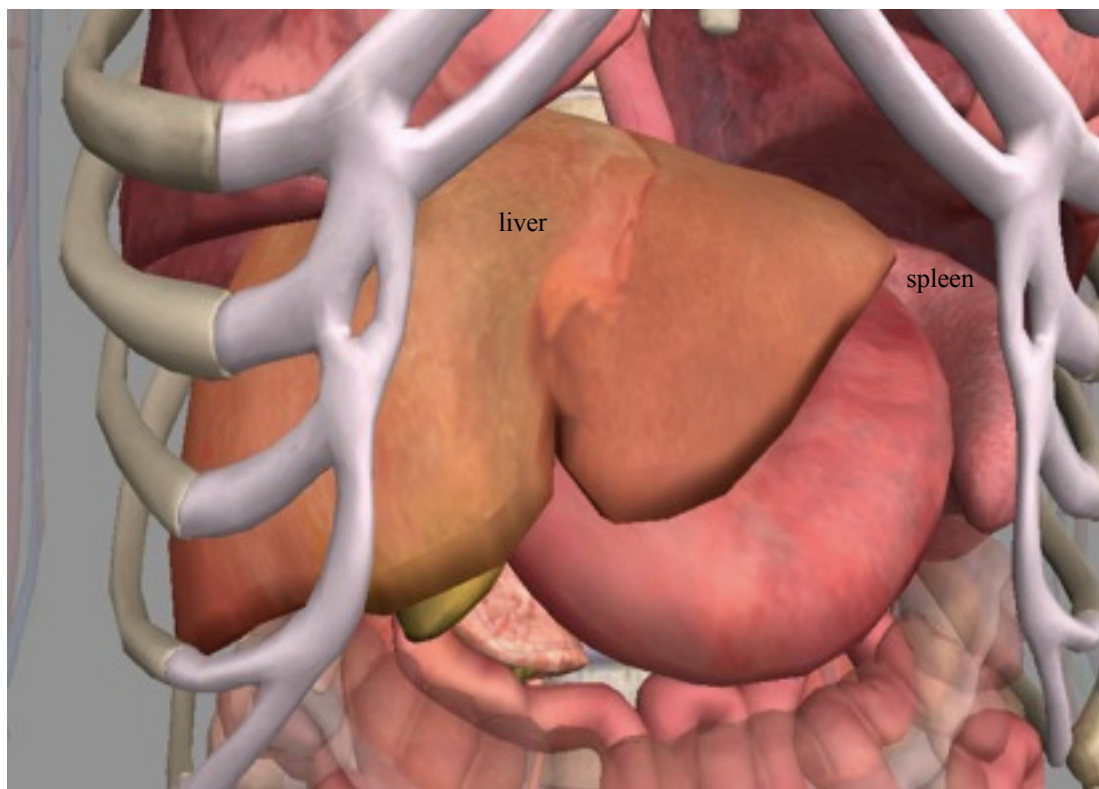
This asana benefits the liver and spleen; both organs play a part in the digestive processes. The liver controls digestion of fats and contributes to the control of your metabolism; the spleen purifies the blood and strengthens the immune system. Once the liver is working correctly the spleen is automatically corrected. Gastric problems and constipation are also alleviated with this asana.

A golden rule for correct digestion when eating is ‘the stomach should be filled half with food, one quarter with liquid, and one quarter air’.



INTERNAL CLEANSING

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Liver and Spleen

Our right heel aims for the spleen (picture below) which is tucked behind the stomach between the 9th and 10th rib (the last two “attached” ribs). As you forward bend with your right heel in your gut, dorsiflex your foot and tuck your heel in under your ribs.

The liver is a little easier to access as it is more superior and external than the spleen. As you put

your left foot in lotus and forward bend aim your heel above your navel, just to the left of your right ribs.

And remember, if your external body is not allowing your heel to get close to your liver or spleen due to tightness or pain -- keep practicing! And use your mind power, as you are in the posture breathing, direct your prana toward the organ the pose is cleansing, this will not only help your body to relax and “get there” but it will also provide much of the same benefit as if your heel were “there”.

