

POSE OF THE MONTH

August 2006

Janu Sirsasana A – Head to knee pose, or head beyond the knee pose. Janu means knee, sirsa means head. This pose combines forward bending and hip rotation—two of the primary components of Primary Series.

Method

- ॐ From Downward facing dog, hop through to Dandasana.
- ॐ Exhaling bend your right knee fully (if possible), pointing and turning the sole of your foot upward (this helps in medial rotation of the femur and opening of the hip joint itself). Place your heel in your right groin and swivel your right knee back to approx. 90° (beginners may need to put the foot closer to the inner thigh)
- 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 or chin toward shin, 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 Dristi (gaze) is at your toes if you are not ‘forehead to knee’ or at the nose if you are. 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. Being able to touch your forehead to your knee in forward bending poses is very grounding; this also helps to maintain your focus (breathing and bandhas) as you are not looking around the room comparing yourself to others.
- ॐ Hold here for five deep breaths, inhaling come up, take vinyasa or switch legs.



Janu Sirsasana is a great pose for lengthening a lower back muscle called the quadratus lumborum. This muscle lies under the erector spinae running from the 12th rib to the iliac crest. The quadratus lumborum tends to get tight in those who stand for long periods of time. Janu Sirsasana also lengthens the waist.

Benefits

Janu Sirsasana has a powerful effect on the urinary system and prostate gland. Also of importance is the pressure from the heel placed on the nerve which stimulates the pancreas to make sufficient insulin (Janu Sirsasana A & B for men and C for women). In addition the heel generates heat which adds a therapeutic effect. In Eastern traditions Janu Sirsasana is prescribed for those who consume too many caffeinated beverages or over-indulge in sexual activity (which zaps vital power).