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POSE OF THE MONTH December 2005

Utkatasana (oot-ka-tasana)
Utkā=Uneven

This asana is said to help reduce fat around the waist. It strengthens the muscles of the legs and back, realigns the spine and is particularly useful for those who have to sit for long periods of time. It is very beneficial for all types of back pain, especially disc problems (it has been said it can help in replacement of the fibrous outer layer of the intervertebral disc when there has been injury). This pose has been used to treat rheumatism and hernias as well.

For therapeutic purposes this asana should be held much longer than 5 breaths—up to 10 minutes!

Method

- ॐ From Downward Facing Dog, jump or step your feet up to your hands, feet, knees, toes together and touching.
- ॐ Exhaling squat down to a demi-squat position, there is a dual effort in this pose to ground the lower body while extending the spine and upper body.
- ॐ Tuck tailbone under body as you drop the sitting bones and “knit” together the rib cage, this will take compression out of the lower back, put length in the spine, and improve your connection with the bandhas. The back ribs should be long.
- ॐ Work toward keeping shoulders over hips
- ॐ Ground through the heels, but keep entire foot grounded feeling weight on all “four corners” of the feet
- ॐ Palms touch overhead with the arms just in front of the cheeks (pulling the arms too far back puts additional strain on the shoulder). The palms touching overhead will be challenging for some individuals, in Ashtanga yoga the palms touching is part of the energy circuit and is important. For someone challenged with that, the arms can be lowered or in some cases you can interlock all but the index fingers.
- ॐ Pay attention to depress the scapula as much as possible while arms are overhead
- ॐ Head is tipped back, keeping the back of your neck long, drishti is upward



To exit this pose, squat down placing hands on the floor on either side of your feet, shift your weight from your feet to your hands, inhaling lift your body up, exhale back to Chaturanga Dandasana using the strength of your arms and abdominals. Or you could just step back and lower down ;)