

Utkatasana (oot-ka-tasana) Utk=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 a few minutes.

Method

- ॐ This pose begins with a sun salute A to down dog. 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 Push back through your hips as if you are about to sit down, “knit” together the rib cage by engaging your abs and tightening in the front of your ribs, 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 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, it is called anjali mudra and it represents balancing the masculine and feminine qualities within us. For someone challenged with that, the arms can be lowered.
- ॐ Pay attention to depress the scapula (slide your shoulder blades down your back toward your hips) as much as possible while arms are overhead
- ॐ Head is tipped back - face toward the sky, 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 ;)