

Anti-ageing ASANAS



Hold back the years and boost your vital life force with these yoga poses, says **Sue Fuller**

Yoga makes us feel good and raises confidence levels. This radiates through our entire being naturally, making us look and feel younger for longer. Here are my top five asanas to include in your regular practice to keep you young and healthy...



A quick fix

If time is short and you are unable to perform a complete yoga practice, try doing the following pranayama. It will help to relax the body and mind and also the facial muscles. It helps relieve tension too, as well as boosting oxygen levels and getting rid of headaches.

BEFORE THE PRACTICE

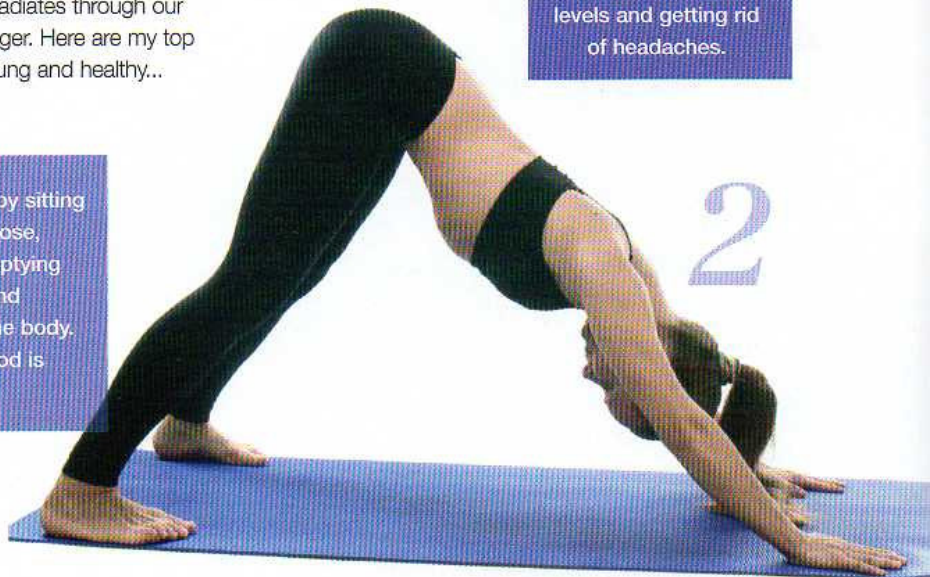
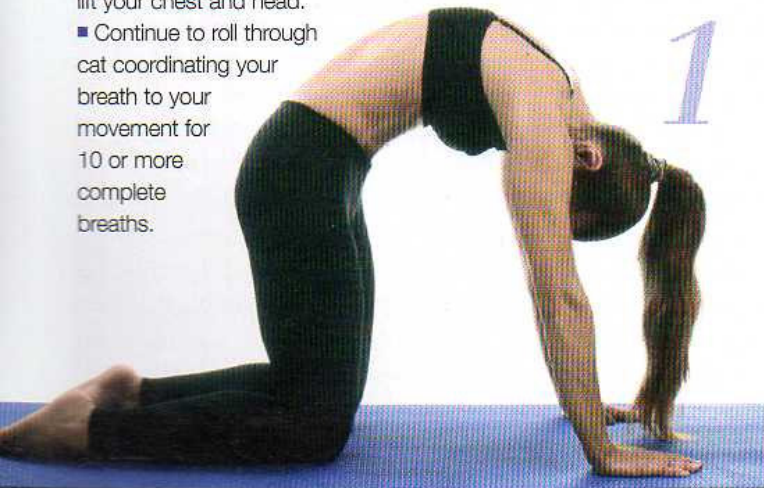
Take the time to establish a correct breathing technique by sitting with a straight spine, breathing in and out through your nose, filling the whole of your lungs with air and completely emptying them again. This will allow you to focus on your breath and encourage prana (vital life force) to move freely around the body. It will also make sure that plenty of fresh oxygenated blood is delivered to every cell.

Majaryasana

Cat pose

Performing majaryasana will help maintain a youthful and healthy spine.

- Begin on all fours with your hands under your shoulders and your knees under your hips. Exhale and as you do so look through your legs and round your spine up towards the ceiling.
- As you do so draw up the lower abdominal muscles and pull your navel towards your spine. When you inhale lengthen your torso moving through your starting position and then tilt your pelvis up and lift your chest and head.
- Continue to roll through cat coordinating your breath to your movement for 10 or more complete breaths.



Practising yoga 2-3 times a week has been shown to lower blood pressure, which reduces the risk of heart attack and stroke

Addho mukha svanasana

Downward facing dog

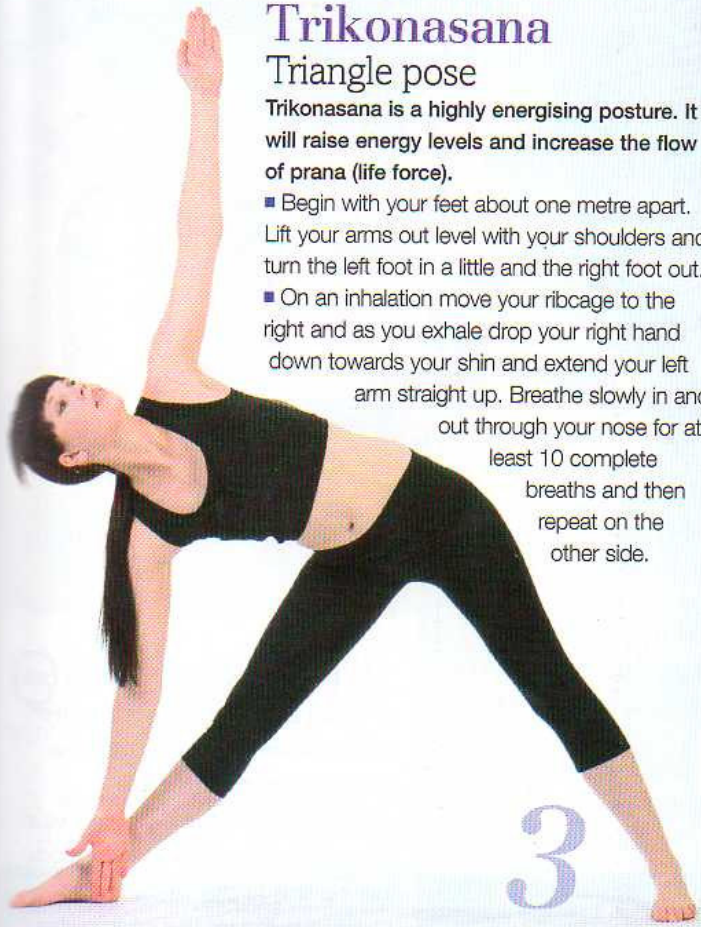
Adho mukha svanasana will keep the muscles in the upper arms and chest toned. It also increases blood supply to the face and head, bringing plenty of oxygen to these areas.

- Begin on all fours with your hands under your shoulders and your knees under your hips. Distribute the weight evenly between your hands and your knees, curl under your toes, and on an exhalation unfold the legs, working to push the floor away with your hands so that you are directing your arm pits towards the floor and your pelvis moves up and back.
- You should be creating a triangular shape with your body and the floor. Hold this posture while drawing your navel back towards your spine or if you really want to activate the deep core muscles, draw up your pelvic floor as you inhale and draw your navel back towards your spine as you exhale.

Trikonasana Triangle pose

Trikonasana is a highly energising posture. It will raise energy levels and increase the flow of prana (life force).

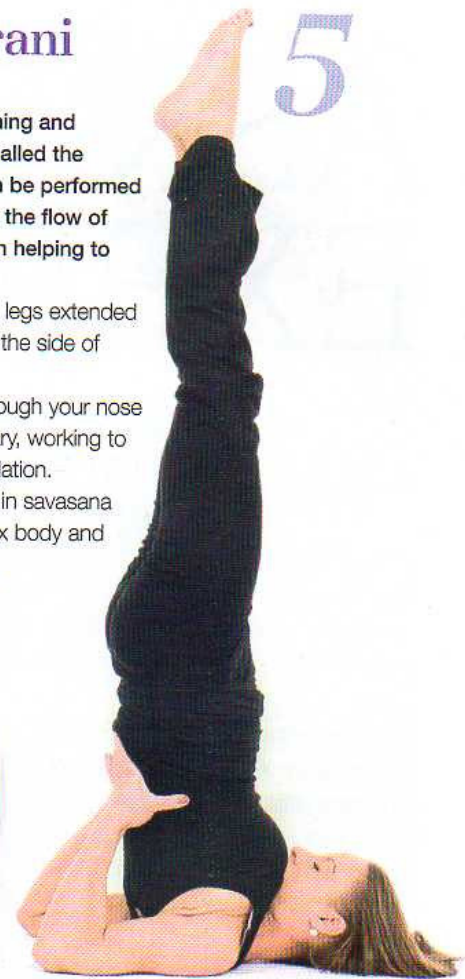
- Begin with your feet about one metre apart. Lift your arms out level with your shoulders and turn the left foot in a little and the right foot out.
- On an inhalation move your ribcage to the right and as you exhale drop your right hand down towards your shin and extend your left arm straight up. Breathe slowly in and out through your nose for at least 10 complete breaths and then repeat on the other side.



Viparita Karani Legs up the wall

This posture has both a soothing and energising effect. It is often called the fountain of youth pose. It can be performed by everyone and will increase the flow of nutrient rich blood to the brain helping to refresh the mind.

- Lie flat on the back with your legs extended up a wall and the arms beside the side of your body with the palms up.
- Breathe slowly in and out through your nose for as long as you feel necessary, working to release tension with each exhalation.
- Always spend a few minutes in savasana (the corpse) to help deeply relax body and mind after your asana practice.



TRY IT!
Studies show yoga can help cure insomnia in cancer survivors and women going through the menopause

Virabhadrasana 1 Warrior 1

Virabhadrasana 1 will tone the legs and improve your physical balance, helping to prevent trips and stumbles happening.

- Begin with the feet about one metre apart, lift your arms out level with your shoulders and turn the left foot in a little and the right foot out. Bend your right knee to form a right angle.
- Now rotate your whole torso 90 degrees to the right and lift your arms up to create a prayer position above your head. Keep the front knee bent. This is warrior 1.
- Hold for 10 complete breaths, drawing your navel back towards your spine and softening your shoulders away from your ears.



Nadi Shodhana Alternate nostril breathing

This wonderful breathing technique helps keep your mind calm, happy and peaceful. Practising it for a few minutes every day will de-stress you and release any tension and fatigue you are feeling.

- Begin sitting comfortably with a straight spine with your hands lightly resting on your knees or thighs. Start to breathe slowly in and out through your nose. Take your time and work to regulate the breath so that it is slow and steady with both inhalation and exhalation lasting for the same duration.
- When you are ready lift your right hand and roll your first two fingers down towards your palm, block your right nostril with your thumb and inhale through your left nostril. Now use your third finger to block the left nostril as you do so release the thumb and exhale through your right nostril, now inhale through the right nostril, block your right nostril with your thumb and release your third finger from the left nostril, exhale through the left and then inhale through the left.
- Continue like this breathing through alternate nostrils with a slow steady breath for 30 complete breaths.

FIND OUT MORE

Sue Fuller is a leading yoga teacher and writer. She is a course author for the British School of Yoga. Sue is also the creator of the Yoga 2 Hear range of audio yoga classes. These have been devised to help you practice yoga regularly at home. For more information please visit yoga2hear.co.uk or wellbeingworldonline.com