

As time passes natural signs of aging are only to be expected. So many of us try to find ways to slow down these signs or even seek ways to turn back the clock at almost any cost. This quest now drives a growing number of extremely lucrative businesses. Practising yoga regularly is an economical and realistic solution to help minimise and slow down some of the many signs of aging.

**Asanas** will combat some of the physical effects of aging both internally and externally by improving muscle tone, strength, flexibility, posture and circulation. They also encourage the internal organs and systems to function efficiently raising levels of health and vitality.

Visually for many the face and neck are the first areas of concern. Simply learning to relax these areas whilst performing basic yoga asanas will help to eliminate fine lines and wrinkles and relax a tense brow. The lion's breath will stretch all of the facial muscles. Remember to include postures that take the head lower than the heart as these will increase the circulation to the facial muscles, ensuring they receive plenty of oxygen and nutrients. Simply inclining the head to each side whilst sitting in Sukhasana (easy cross legged pose) will help stretch and tone the muscles of the neck.

As we age our muscle tone diminishes and keeping any problematic areas toned can become a challenge. Adho Mukha Svanasana (Downward Facing Dog), Dolphin and Plank will keep the muscles in the upper arms and chest toned. Navasana (the boat) will work wonders for the core muscles and standing balances will tone the legs and not to mention improve physical balance helping to prevent trips and stumbles.

To help keep the eyes healthy, relaxed and refreshed make sure you include a few simple eye exercises during your asana practice. Palming will refresh tired eyes helping to eliminate dark circles and relax all of the muscles around the eyes.

The loss of flexibility that occurs with age can be the cause of many problems such as reduced mobility, stiffness, poor posture, joint pain and other minor aches and pains. If these symptoms are left ignored they can greatly reduce levels of health and vitality and be the root cause of other major conditions.

Performing Majaryasana (the cat) will help maintain spinal elasticity and a simple spinal twist will gently remove tension through the lower back and help eliminate postural imbalances. Halasana (the plough) is wonderful for the spine and provides a fantastic release for the upper back and shoulders too. However do take care of your neck when performing this posture and make sure that you keep your head still. Surya Namaskar (Sun Salutation) will set you up perfectly for the day ahead eliminating those tight achy muscles that we often experience upon waking. A Yin style yoga practice, where postures are held for considerably longer than other more dynamic forms of yoga will help to release deep-set tension and greatly improve joint mobility.

Yoga is also a great way of improving and maintaining correct alignment. As we age changes naturally occur to our alignment and posture. The shoulders often roll forward because we use our hands and arms in front of the body. Yoga postures such as Matsyasana (the fish) and Ushtraasana (the camel) will help to release and open the chest and shoulders. Another common problem is uneven weight distribution. Habit often causes us to stand with the weight on one leg more than the other creating imbalances and possible joint pain and stiffness. Yoga provides us with the awareness to correct the way we hold our bodies thus helping to eliminate any problems. Focusing on correct alignment and weight distribution in postures such as Tadasana (the mountain) and Badha Konasana (bound angle pose sitting with the soles of the feet together) will help create awareness and remove any bad habits that have set in.



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