

Spring Cleaning Your Body, Mind, and Spirit

It's spring and time for some cleansing in body, mind and spirit. In many modes of eastern medicine, especially Ayurveda, the sister-science to Yoga, it's believed that before you build wellness and strength you must first cleanse. Yoga poses that heat the system, twist the torso, and invert the body help to cleanse by with moving lymph fluid, spinal decompression, and organ cleansing.

First, Add a Little Heat



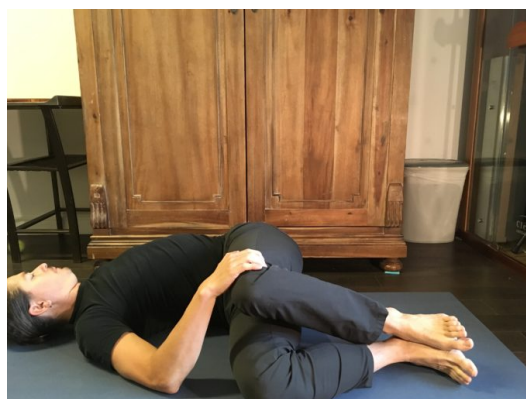
Photo by David Newkirk

Before cleansing the system, it's necessary to add Tapas.

Tapas isn't only a word for tasty Spanish dishes served on little plates but also a Sanskrit word described in the Yoga Sutras as the heat necessary for transformation. Getting the body to heat up with poses that warm up the body (without overly challenging it) is very useful before cleansing the body. These poses include standing poses like Warrior I, II, and III, Side Angle Pose, and Triangle Pose. Once the body heats up, it's ready for cleansing.

Twists: Cleansing Poses

Some of the poses that are excellent for cleansing are twists. One of the reasons we want things twisting and inverting is for our lymph. Not to be confused with the spritely libido-rich fairies so abundant in enchanted forests, this kind of "ymph" could be considered to be the system of spritely fairies that fly around the forest of your body's fluids systems and with their rich source of white blood cells they put magical spells on bacteria and other disease-causing microorganisms, spells that send these unwanted guests into your eliminatory systems. The problem with the lymph system is that unlike our circulatory system, lymph depends on movements like twists to circulate and do their work. Some yoga postures that help with this are seated and standing twists like Ardhamatsyandrasana and Twisting Crescent Lunge Pose. is one of the best ways of keeping the lymph moving and thus keeping you healthy.



Twists also keep the body healthy by rotating the vertebral bodies of your spine and building strength and flexibility in the deep and superficial spinal and abdominal muscles. Twists ensure elasticity in the disks between the vertebrae as well as the ligaments of the back. Twists alternately compress and stretch the hemispheres of the chest, stimulating respiratory function. They also give a healthy massage to other vital organs, like the stomach, liver, intestines, and kidneys. Plus, twisting can help restore symmetry between the shoulders and pelvis which can be the problem of some kinds of back pain.

Because the nervous system revolves (literally) around the spinal cord, twisting the spine also wrings out the nervous system. This is one of the meeting spots of mind and body: twists and other tension-relieving poses do wonders to help relieve emotional tension that gets trapped in the body in the form of tight muscles.

Inversions



Photo by Seneca Moore

Inversions are poses that turn you upside-down. Some common inversions are Headstand, Handstand, and Legs-Up-The-Wall Pose. Just like twists, inversions are great to help you cleanse your system. Our digestive system sometimes get compacted and turning things upside-down helps to get things moving again. Inversions are also excellent for decompressing your spine, strengthening your arms and shoulders, and strengthening both the deep and superficial core muscles.

Getting upside-down is perhaps the best way of moving lymph through the bod and cleaning house. Inversions also build muscles in the neck and shoulders. They tone vital organs and stimulate glands. Like twists, inversions build strength and flexibility in the superficial and deep muscles and connective tissue along the spine and rib cage, most notably in the diaphragm and abdominal muscles. With all this muscular toning along our spine and ribs, our posture shapes up. When done

properly, inversions can lengthen our spine. Inversions also help out your digestion, respiration, and circulation systems. Last, inversions can maybe help you look at this sludge in the air in a different way, when you see it from upside-down.

Consider some gently-heating poses, twists, and inversions as you're mindfully planning how to spring clean your body, mind, and spirit.



Photo by Seneca Moore

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