

# Yoga Health - Relieve

Lower back pain is one of the most common reasons people join yoga classes and it is said that at some point during our lives we may very well experience some form of spinal discomfort

“When you are kind to the body it will respond in an incredible way”  
Vanda Scaravelli.

I teach a specific ‘yoga for lower backs’ course aimed at those who have lower back pain and discomfort. The course is helpful for prevention and management of lower back pain and gentle reclining twists are just one of the beneficial postures included in the programme. The reclined twist is a versatile posture because it can be modified to suit every body.

I have yet to hear of one of my clients say that they do not like Reclining Twists. It is one of

those postures very restorative postures and if approached correctly can feel very supported. Because you are lying on a good surface supported by the earth you can surrender your body to gravity. A number of props and modifications can be used to aid comfort in the posture. The twist can also be performed whilst lying in bed and is great to do when you wake and before you step out of bed.

How to perform a reclining twist;

## Step-by-step:

1. To begin, make sure you have any props you may need around you, e.g. bolster, rolled blankets, cushion, yoga block.
2. Prepare the floor putting down a yoga mat or use two yoga mats or anything that will be firm and comfortable for you to lie on.
3. Lie on your back with your knees bent, feet to the floor and relax for a few minutes. Tune into your breath and allow your spine to settle on the floor.
4. Lengthen your neck and spine and keep your tail bone grounded. Allow your lower back



# Relieve Lower Back Pain with a Reclining Twist

to be neutral finding its natural arch. Soften your shoulders back towards the earth, arms by your side resting on the floor. If you find your head naturally tilts backwards use a small neatly folded towel underneath your head to lengthen the neck and encourage chin toward your chest.

5. Take a few gentle, breaths relaxing your whole body a little deeper on the exhalation.
6. Bring awareness to your naval and remember to draw the naval toward the spine to support your lower back.
7. Spread the arms out and place them on the floor, just below shoulder height, palms face up toward the sky.
8. Bring the knees and feet together.
9. Take an inhale and as you exhale slowly with control and naval engaged allow your legs to roll to your right side.
10. The twisting action is most effective when the left shoulder stays firmly on the ground. If the arm floats and your arm won't reach the ground use a folded blanket or cushion and



place underneath the arm for support.

11. Aim to rest your right knee on the floor with your left knee on top of the right. If you find your knees do not reach the floor once again use a prop underneath the right upper outside of leg, e.g. bolster, cushion.
12. Turn your head slowly to gaze toward the left thumb and then close your eyes so you can tune into how your body feels, being mindful of any signals your body may be giving you.
13. The longer you stay in the posture the more you will feel the benefit. While you are trying to deepen the stretch, become fully aware of every part of the body that is feeling the stretch.
14. Relax the body and focus your awareness on your breathing, breath in to the side, back and front ribs. Wherever you feel any tightness let go and relax those muscles and allow your body to ease into the posture slowly. As the muscles relax, you may be able to go deeper into the twist.
15. Let go of any effort to deepen the stretch and simply allow gravity to do its work while you





maintain total mindfulness of every muscle that is feeling the stretch. Hold the twist for five minutes or longer.

16. To release the twist, turn your head to centre, engage your naval toward the spine and gently draw your knees back to centre.
17. Adjust your starting position and when you are ready repeat the above steps on the other side (left).
18. When you have finished lie in Shavasana (relaxation) for a few minutes.
19. Draw your knees towards your chest and turn slowly to your side using your hands to help you and roll up to sitting or standing.

### Props

If you find the above too strong on your lower spine modify using props. For example, place a small yoga block or cushion between to the inside of the upper thighs. This is a softer version and modification. Alternatively if you would like to deepen the twist you can start with the knees hugging in towards your chest, keep your knees together and roll slowly to your side on an exhale.

### Benefits:

- Stretching and twisting of the spine makes the back, especially the lower back, strong and supple.
- Great for the health of the spine and the entire nervous system as all the nerves pass through the spine.
- Encourages massage of the internal organs e.g.

liver, pancreas and the intestine, improving their functioning.

- Helps digestion.
- Improves blood circulation throughout the body.
- Helps eliminate metabolic waste and toxins. The organs also get fresh oxygenated blood.
- Reduces fatigue and brings about a feeling of well-being and relaxation.
- It is said the posture is also helpful for those suffering from migraines and headaches.

From the photos you will see I have included various modifications of the reclining twist.

### Contraindications

Avoid the posture if you have severe back pain or any form of disc problems.

Avoid any compression to the abdomen if you have had recent abdominal surgery or pregnant.

“ As tension is released and joints become free new deep muscles awaken, increasingly movement takes place in the spine rather than in the large superficial muscles that are accustomed to working ”

Vanda Scaravelli

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