

Elbow to Knee 2

Level 2 / Posture 38

Benefits:

Strengthens & loosens shoulders & lower back; strengthens sides of chest & abdominals.

Time to Do: 1 - 3 minutes

Body Parts Used by This Posture:

Shoulders; Sides of Chest, Arms, Lower Back, Abdominals

Warms You Up for: Elbow to Knee 1 & 3, Chest Expansion, Back Bend, Bow, Bust Expansion, Posture Clasp, Dancer's Posture 3, Balance Posture, Half Moon, Twist, Rishi's Posture, Bow, Half Bow, Back Push Up

Warm Up with: Bust Expansion, Posture Clasp, Dancer's Posture 3, Back Stretch, Twist, Rishi's Posture

Builds you up for: Postures requiring flexibility in shoulders, or lower back; postures that require abdominal strength: Balance Posture, Back Bend, Chest Expansion Shoulder Stand, Head Stand, Elbow to Knee 1 & 3, Bow, Half Bow, Back Push Up, Half Moon, Twist, Balance Posture

Energy Center Used: Heart, Solar Plexus



Here's one of the few beginning level poses that gets the kinks out of the lower back and neck with a nice twist. It's a good one to help loosen up stiff shoulders & necks – but if your shoulders are really stiff you might find yourself resisting it. Remember, yoga is to be enjoyed! Take the posture in little bits – do one side, rest your arms, then re-establish your pose and do the other side. You'll gradually see benefits. (Which is better than not doing the pose at all and getting no benefits!) Remember, if the pose challenges you then you probably need it! In which case, do poses that build up to it, or do the pose a little at a time.

Yoga Snack

A nice break while you're watching TV; or sitting under a tree at lunch time.

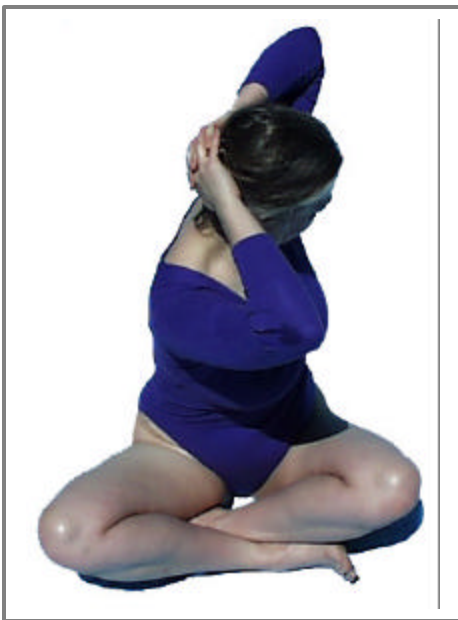
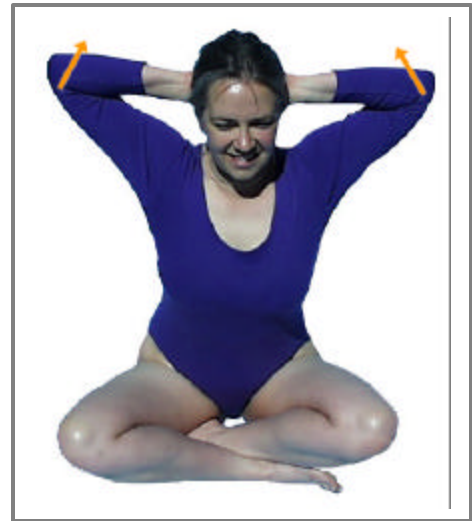


Start

Sitting with legs crossed (or in lotus position if you can manage it)

Then

Raise arms
Lace fingers together behind your head
Open your elbows (just until you feel a stretch in your arms)



Twist at the hips. This will turn your whole body, your shoulders and your arms.

Tip Keep your back straight while doing this. Think of the elbows, shoulders, arms and back as joined together – so that they move together.

Pause

Now
Bend at the waist. This will lower your body



toward the floor and will start bringing an elbow toward the opposite knee.

Once you're down as far as you can go **Hold 0 – 2 breaths**

Release
Return Upright - Untwist

Key Raise your body upright, then untwist. Don't do both motions at once.



Key Bending at the waist is like a hinge closing. Not – hunching the body forward.

In these pictures Corinne is hunching while twisting. See how that pulls her spine and neck out of alignment with each other.



Safety Tip Do not pull your head downward with your hands. This will overstrain your neck and can easily injure you. You will know if you've been doing that by feeling strain, tightness or tension in your neck after doing the posture.

Encouragement You might only be able to stretch a little of the distance. Don't worry if you don't make it to the floor. That's not the point. The point is to work your body, build up your muscles and have a good stretch. If you get these benefits from going only part way down, you're getting the same work out as the yogi on the mountain top who can reach the floor with their elbow.



For More of a Challenge

Once it is easy to reach your knee, (and it can happen for you!), add to the challenge and benefits: by-pass your knee and aim for the floor in front of your knee.

Remember to do the bending from the waist – keep your spine straight.

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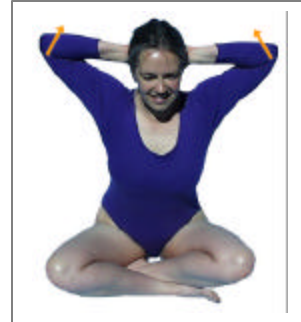
Breathing



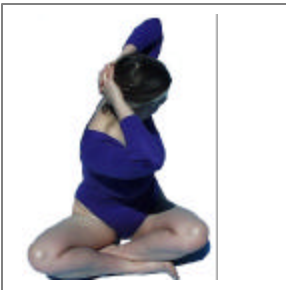
Starting position
Breathe in
Breathe out, letting your weight settle into place.



Breathe in
Bringing your arms up & lacing your fingers behind your head



Still breathing in
Settle your arms into place, open up your elbows



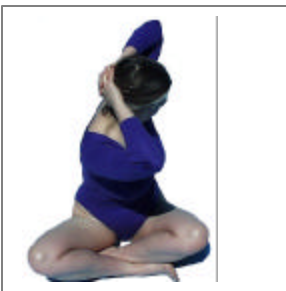
Breathe out
Twisting your body



Still breathing out
Lower your body.

Key This pose is almost impossible to do unless you're breathing out when you're lowering your body down!

Hold 0 – 2 breaths



Breathe in
Raising your body



Breathe out
Untwisting

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Discovery

The first time you do this pose, try experimenting with doing it wrong. This is so you can learn what it feels like when you drift off course, and so you'll know what it feels like to do the pose well.

1. After Twisting, hunch your back.

How does the stretch change?

You'll probably feel a lot less stretching in your abdominals and lower back. (That also makes it easier to reach the floor, but, hey, that wasn't the point!)

2. Keep your back bent and your lower your body toward your leg.

What muscles are working differently?

3. Now adjust your position so that it's more correct. Fold at the waist like a door closing. How does the stretch change?

4. Straighten up your body, line up your back, your arms and elbows.

See how that improves the stretch?