

Benefits:

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

Time to Do: 1 - 3 minutes

Body Parts Used by This Posture

Sides of chest, arms, lower back, shoulders

Warms You Up for: 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

Try Learning First: Elbow to Knee 1, Elbow to Knee 2

Energy Center Used: Heart, Solar Plexus



Here's a nice quick break that gets the kinks out of the lower back and neck. 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 to focus on your breathing, rather than worry about getting somewhere with the posture. If this pose feels tough for you take it in little bits – do one side, rest your arms, then re-establish your pose and do the other side. Your neck and back will thank you for it! Remember, if the pose challenges you then you probably need it! In which case, do poses that build up to this until you can manage this one, 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. The twisting motion gives you a chance to look at the clouds rolling by.

Difference from Elbow to Knee 1 & 2 This pose combines the movements of Elbow to Knee 1 & 2. If there is some part of this stretch that doesn't work for you, try the simplified forms of Elbow to Knee 1 or Elbow to Knee 2.

Overview



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)

Step 1

Lower your body & arms to one side.
That is, bring your elbow down toward the floor.

Tip: aim for the piece of floor beside your hip, this will keep you from leaning forward.



Pause	Hold 1 – 2 breaths (or not at all)	Return Upright
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Then – Step 2

From the upright position again:

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

Tip: 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 it will start bringing an elbow toward the opposite knee.

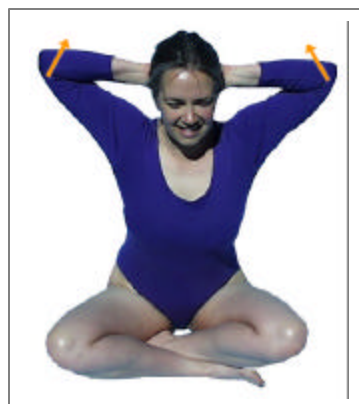
Once you're down as far as you can go **Hold 0 – 2** breaths



Release

Return upright

Untwist



Key Raise your body upright, then untwist.

Don't do both motions at once.

Additional Details – Step 1

Key Don't let your body drift forward when you're doing the stretch. Keep your elbow in line with your hip as you lower yourself down.

Tip There will come a point with the stretch when you start to tip – where your body quickly slips the rest of the distance to the floor. Try not to let this happen. If that means that you don't make it to the floor, that's OK. By proceeding with control for the entire stretch, you will get the most benefit.



Key Proceed slowly & with control

Safety Tip Do not pull your head downward with your hands. This will overstrain your neck and can easily injure you. →



Additional Details – Step 2



Key Bend at the waist, like a box closing. Not – hunching the body forward.

All Steps

Key See that your body, your neck & your back stay straight the entire time, not slouched.

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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 or to your knee. 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.

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
Open up your elbows



Breathe out
Lowering your body to
the side



Pause, Hold (Optional)
Breathe in, raising your
body.



Breathe out
adjusting your body
back into starting
position.



Breathe in
Breathe out, twisting



Still breathing out,
bend forward.

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

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Breathe in
Raising your body



Breathe out
Untwisting

Pause

**Repeat 3 times on
each side, alternating
sides.**

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