

Knee Stretches

Level 1 Difficulty

Here's an excellent remedial pose for lower back and hip issues. It's great for beginners who want to build up to tougher poses like Leg Overs, Eagle, Triangle poses & Twists plus anything demanding strength and flexibility in your knees. Great in the morning or as a warm up for any workout.

Main Benefits: Loosens outer hip, sacrum, lower back, hip rotators, inner thigh and knees.

Body Parts Used by This Posture: Outer Hip, Sacrum, Lower Back, Hip Rotators, Glutes, Inner Thigh, Knees

Combines Well with: Happy Baby, Dead Bug, Reclining Butterfly, Hip Opener.

Compensating Pose (Follow Up with a Brief Repetition of): Leg Fold 1 or a hip opener like Happy Baby, Dead Bug or Reclining Butterfly.

Alternative Pose / Warm Up Pose: Side to Sides

Builds You Up for / Warms You Up for: Frog, Jumping Frog, Leg Over 1, Leg Over 2, Eagle's Feet, Full Eagle, Modified Side Stretch 1 & 2, Moon Salutations, Triangle poses, Twists.

Build Up to with: Leg Fold 1, Side to Sides

Good for These Practice Goals: Flexibility of Lower Back, Sacrum, Abdominals, Outer Hips, Glutes, Inner Thigh, Quads, Knees; Morning Yoga, Pregnancy Fitness, Seniors Yoga, Sports, including Sports Warm Up, Running, Biking, Marital Arts, Golf;

Improving Personal Posture; Clearing Cleansing & Energizing of the Meditation warm up.

Recommended for These Health Conditions: arthritis in knees, hips;

osteoporosis in: lower back, hips, knees; fibromialgia, chronic injury of hip, lower back or knees, IBS, menstruating (having your period) at this moment, throughout pregnancy, restless legs, sciatica, scoliosis, pronation of feet or misalignment of hips.

Avoid Under these Health Conditions: fresh knee injury / surgery, pins in back: lower back; pins in knee, pins in ankle region, pregnancy - last half, Osteoporosis in: hips, knees;

Best Breathing Theme Matches: Red Level Breathing Themes 1, 2, 2.5 & 3; Orange Level Breathing Themes 5, 7, 8; Green Level Breathing Themes 14, 15A, 15, 15B, and Breathing Themes 20, 21, 22B and 23

Best for Flexibility or Strength: Flexibility

Best if Movement Oriented or Static: Static or Movement

Traditional Pose Type: Twist

Energy Center Used: Root and Belly



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Basic Instruction

Starting in Corpse Pose

- Lying on your back
- Legs outstretched
- Legs, hips, spine, neck & head lined up with each other
- Arms by your sides



Placing your feet just outside the edges of your mat usually gives the best foot placement for most people.

Bring your knees up, feet flat on the floor, into 'Tent' position.

Have your feet mat-width apart, resting flat on the floor just outside the edges of your mat. Feet point away from your head, with the insides of your feet running along the edges of your mat.

Safety Tip If your feet are too far apart, it will strain your hip. This is one reason it is important for you to discover your own personal, optimal foot placement.

Tip If your feet are too close together, it will limit your ability to go into the stretch. If they are too far apart, you will strain your hips. If you have long legs, you will probably have to have a little extra distance between your feet.



Next

Bring one knee down toward the floor, in the direction of the other leg. (Bringing your knee 'in and down'.) This is done by allowing your hip to rotate. Your foot rotates along with your leg. It does not have to stay flat on the floor.

If you are new to the pose and still coming to terms with it

Hold the position, feeling your body sinking more and more into the pose with each breath out. Let breath and gravity do all the work. (This is the passive form of the stretch.)

Hold for 6 or more breaths or until you realize you have no more stretch in the knee & hip.

Optional Active Phase

Just before you release, give one last breath out and actively see if the stretch will go any farther. You do this purposefully drawing the knee closer and closer to the floor as you breathe out, being an active participant in making the stretch go farther. Do this gently and slowly, being mindful of your body's limits. **Do not push into the point of pain or burning sensation.**

Release by bringing your knee up to its original starting position.

Wait while your body lets go of the stretch.

Feel your hips and legs sinking down and relaxing with each breath out.

Switch Sides

Repeat

Do 3 repetitions on each side, alternating sides.

Common Errors



Non-stretching leg wandering out to the side.

- Allowing the non-stretching leg to 'stray'. This throws off your alignment in your other leg and in your hips. This often happens when the legs are too close. It can also come from lack of attention – mind wandering, etc.
- Keeping the foot flat on the floor, not letting it rotate along with the leg and knee. This habit will tend to twist your knee, risking injury, and will limit your range of movement, making it hard to go deeply into the stretch.
- Not giving enough distance between the legs. This throws off the alignment in the stretching leg & foot and interferes with the leg being able to stretch downward before bumping into the other leg.
- Giving too much distance between the legs. This will set your hips joints out of alignment and will risk irritating them or injuring them. It also reduces the amount of rotation you will have in your hips, leg and knee.



Legs too close. See how this throws off the alignment in the stretching leg & foot and interferes with the leg being able to stretch downward before bumping into the other leg.



Too much space between the feet. See how this interferes with the rotation of the leg.

Discovery Exercise Once you understand the basics of this pose, experiment with your foot placement, spreading your feet farther apart or bringing them a little closer together to give you the distance for the best results.

Breathing Basics

Settling into the Tent position
Breathe out and feel your body sinking down and letting go.

Breathe in, bringing your attention to the first knee
Breathe out, bring your knee in-and-down

Hold for 4 – 6 breaths

or until your body will give you no more stretch even with the breath out.

Release

Breathe in, raising the knee
Breathe out, as your leg settles back into the starting position and your body releases the stretch.



Corinne is demonstrating what happens when the foot of stretching leg is kept in complete contact with the floor, not allowed to rotate. Notice how it reduces the depth of the stretch.

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Vinyasa Breathing (Yellow Level Breathing)

This pose lends itself well to constant movement, where you flow and out of the pose with your breath. In these cases, you do not hold the pose for any length of time but simply move in rhythm with your breath. For each repetition you see if you can breathe out a little longer and stretch a little farther than the previous repetition.

Once you have relaxed into your starting position

Breathing out, one knee comes in-and-down.

Pause your breath and your movements.

Breathing in, bring that knee up.

Pause your breath and your movements.

Breathing out, the other knee comes in-and-down

Pause your breath and your movements.

Breathing in, bring that knee up.

Pause your breath and your movements.

Repeating for at least 5 rounds.

Great Combinations Using the Knee Stretch

Knee Stretches combine well with any reclining pose that opens up the hips, like Happy Baby, Dead Bug, Reclining Butterfly or the Hip Opener Pose. Combine any of these with the Knee Stretch to give you warm ups to tougher poses requiring hip or to simply help open and loosen your lower body. These combinations can be good for remedial work on your lower back, hips and knees, as well. Check with your medical practitioners and with the instructions on the other poses, first, though to make sure you're not in the groups that should not be doing these poses.



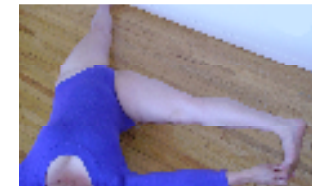
Happy Baby



Dead Bug



Reclining Butterfly



Hip Opener

When in doubt, a good choice for breathing for these combinations is to hold each position until you reach the limit of your ability to stretch, feeling your body letting go and relax more and more into the stretch with each breath out (*Red Level Breathing Themes*), or use *Yellow* or *Green Level Breathing Themes* for great results also. See our notes (above) on *Vinyasa (Yellow Level) Breathing*, or go to our website for tips on how to use *Green Level Breathing* with most poses.