

Leg Press

Level 1 Difficulty

Leg Press helps you begin getting your abs, lower back and hamstrings into shape. Whether you've been inactive or are recovering from an injury, it's a good place to start when other exercises are still too demanding. It can be done by just about anybody. It mixes well with the Knee Over or even Leg Over 1 to fully work your abs, lower back, sacrum, outer hip and hamstrings.



Main Benefits: Strengthens abdominals and lower back; loosens hips & hamstrings.

Body Parts Used by This Posture: Lower Back, Abdominals, Hamstrings

Compensating Pose: Leg Fold

Combines Well with: Leg Over 1, Happy Baby, Reclining Butterfly, Knee Stretches, Knee Over, Side to Sides

Build Up to with / Warm Up with: Abdominal Lifts 1, 2; Pelvic Push

Builds You Up for / Warms You Up for: Abdominal Lifts 1 & 2; Back Bends; Bow poses; Hip Openers like Butterfly poses, Happy Baby & Dead Bug; Balancing poses like Balance Posture 1, 2 & 3 and Standing Leg Stretch 1, 2 & 3; Cobra-like poses including Cobra, Camel, Fish; Poses requiring core strength like Plank, Incline Plane, Shoulder Stands, Plow; also Pelvic Lifts, Leg Overs, Side Raise, Spider poses; Sun Salutations; and Breathing Exercises like Abdominal Breathing, Core Breathing, The Wave, Sacral Breathing & Chants 1 & 2.

Best for Flexibility or Strength: Strength

Good for These Practice Goals: Core Strengthening; Arthritis; Clearing, Cleansing & Energizing of Root & Belly Chakras; Morning Yoga; Building Strength in Middle Back, Lower Back, Sacrum, Abdominals; General Flexibility of Whole Leg & Hamstrings; Pregnancy Yoga; Seniors' Yoga; General Yoga for Sports; Warm Up for Chanting from the Root or Belly.

Best if Movement Oriented or Static: Static

Traditional Pose Type: Forward Bend

Energy Center Used: Root, Belly (Sacrum), Solar Plexus (somewhat)

Best Breathing Theme Matches: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 7b, 8, 9, 14, 15a, 15b, 17, 18, 20, 23

Recommended for These Health Conditions: Chronic lower back injury, IBS menstruating (having your period) at the moment of doing your routine, pregnancy yoga, sciatica.

Avoid Under these Health Conditions: Fresh injury or surgery of your hip or lower back; osteoporosis in you lower back.

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Start

Lie on your back, legs outstretched, neck lined up with your spine, chin pointing upward.

Open up your arms so that your body makes the little letter 't', (the "airplane" position).

Palms touching the floor, (palms facing downward).



Next

- Bend one knee and bring it up toward your chest
- Then straighten your leg, so your foot is aiming more directly toward the ceiling.



Safety Tip Do not raise your leg without bending it first. If you keep your leg straight while raising it up, you put too much strain on your lower back. Bend it, then raise it.

Once your leg is in place, have it as straight as possible without straining your hamstring.

Your foot does not have to be pointed. It's better to have it sitting loose at the end of your leg.

Key Have your leg aimed directly toward the ceiling, even if this means bending your knee slightly. If you bend your knee, only bend it as much as is necessary to avoid straining your hamstring.

Once your leg is in place, press your leg and hip down deeply toward the floor. This will flatten out your lower back. You'll feel your abdominals working.

Hold for 6 or more breaths or until the muscles in your lower back and abdominal area start to feel a little tired.

Key Don't rush this pose. Hold is as long as you can while still being able to release it with control. This will give you the best chance of building up muscle strength, which is the purpose of the pose.

Release by reversing your movements.

Safety Tip Do not lower your leg without bending it first. If you keep your leg straight while lowering it, you will put too much strain on your lower back. Bend it, then lower it.



After the repetition, feel your muscles letting go of the stretch, your lower body sinking into the ground. Once you feel the tension from the stretch is completely dissolved, you're ready to do the other leg.

Do 3 times to each side, alternating sides.

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Breathing

Going into the pose
("Acquiring" the pose)



Breathe in



Still breathing in.

Pause your movement and your breath.

Breathing out, press your hip and leg down toward the floor.



Breathe in bending your knee back down to your chest.



Breathe out, lowering your leg back down to the floor.

Hold for 6 or more breaths or until the muscles in your lower back and abdominals begin to "tire".

Combining Leg Press with Leg Overs

Leg Press adds a good additional step to the Leg Over, providing extra benefits to the lower back and hips. Blend them in this way:



Breathe in
Bringing your knee up.



Still breathing in, straightening your leg for Leg Press



Breathe out, pressing your leg and hip down toward the floor.

Optional Hold for 6 or more breaths in this position for several breaths to build lower back and abdominal strength.

You will need to have your leg & knee completely straight (but not tight) for the Leg Over. This may mean lowering your leg a little in order to straighten it completely.



Breathe out as you cross your leg over and lower it toward the floor.

Hold for several breaths, until your body stretches no further even while breathing out.

Reverse your steps to release the pose(s).



Common Errors for Leg Press

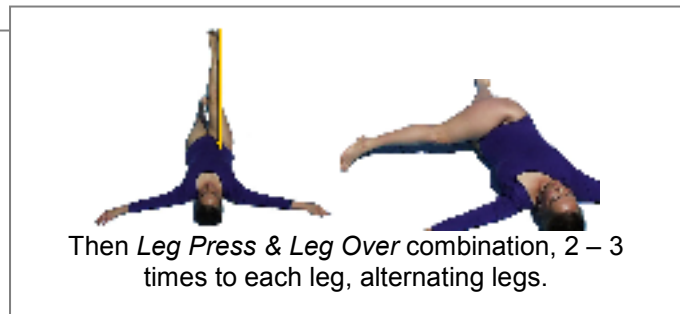
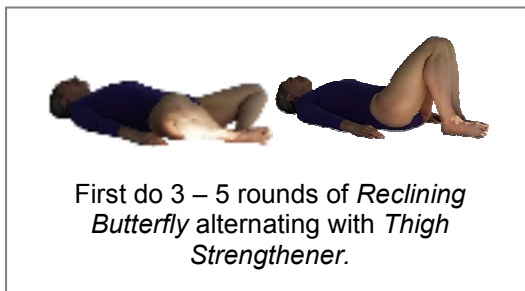
- **Rushing the pose.** Try holding the pose for longer periods to give your muscles the message to become stronger.
- **Tip** Focus on long slow breaths out and the pose will practically take care of itself.

Common Errors for Leg over

- **Bending the leg** while in the upright position or in the 'leg over' position or while moving it back and forth between the two positions.
- **Partially lowering the leg** while lifting it out of the 'leg over' position.
- Letting the shoulders leave the floor.

Great Combinations

For a complete release of your entire hip area, try several rounds of *Reclining Butterfly & Thigh Strengtheners*, followed by Leg Press and Leg Over. (Level 2 – 3 Difficulty).



If you're focusing on gaining flexibility, move into and out of each pose in rhythm with your breath. The Yellow and Blue Level Breathing Themes are very helpful for this.

If you're focusing on strength (with a bonus of some flexibility), then hold each movement for several breaths until your muscles begin to feel tired of the pose. With each breath out, notice if your body will naturally give you any more flexibility. The Red and Green Level Breathing Themes are good for this.