

Handout 4: Yoga Movement for Chronic Pain

Yoga can be an effective practice for chronic pain management. Instructions for five poses are included here: 1) Seated Lateral Stretch, 2) One-legged Butterfly, 3) Seated Twist, 4) Cat and Cow, and 5) Child's Pose. Try the poses in the order provided. Some poses are labeled "Version 1" or "Version 2." Choose one version of each pose to try.

Work within your physical ability level. A core concept of yoga is to respect your body. Be mindful of how your body feels when practicing yoga. Stop doing any pose that feels painful.

Seated Lateral Stretch



Instructions:

1. Sit up straight, drawing your shoulders down and back away from your ears, head in line with your spine, feet flat on the floor.
2. Place your right hand on your right hip. Inhale, and raise your left arm up, elbow slightly bent.
3. Keeping the left hip in contact with the chair, exhale and extend the left arm over your head toward the right. Keep the arm in line with your ear, extending through the fingers.
4. Hold for 1 – 3 breaths or 10 – 30 seconds.
5. On an exhale, lower the extended arm and slowly return to center. Repeat on the opposite side.
6. Perform stretch twice on each side.

Note: For more stability, hold on to the chair instead of placing hand on hip.

One-legged Butterfly (Version 1)



Instructions:

1. Sit up straight, drawing your shoulders down and back away from your ears, head in line with your spine, feet flat on the floor. Inhale.
2. Exhale, and place your right ankle on top of your left thigh just behind your knee.
3. Rest your right hand on your right knee and your left hand on your right ankle.
4. Hold for 3 – 5 breaths. Return to the starting position on an exhale.
5. Repeat on the other side.

Note: If this is too difficult, keep both feet on the floor and cross your ankles. For a more intense stretch, lean slightly forward. Keep the back straight.

One-legged Butterfly (Version 2)



Instructions:

1. Sit up straight with your shoulders down and back away from your ears and your feet flat on the floor. Inhale.
2. Exhale and place the ankle of your left leg on top your right leg just above your knee. Inhale.
3. Exhale and lean forward from the hips, folding your torso over your legs. Hold for 3 – 5 breaths.
4. Inhale and slowly return to the starting position. Repeat on the other side.
5. Repeat this pose two to three times on each side.

* To deepen the stretch, place your elbow (on the side of the top leg) on your thigh just above the knee and gently press down as you lean forward.

Seated Twist (Version 1)



Instructions:

1. Sit up straight with your shoulders down and back away from your ears, feet flat on the floor. Inhale.
2. Hold your arms in front of you with your forearms stacked.
3. On an exhale, twist your torso to the right. Keep both hips planted in the chair. Hold for 1 – 3 breaths.
4. Inhale and return to center. Repeat on the other side.
5. Repeat 3 – 5 times.

Seated Twist (Version 2)



Instructions:

1. Sit up straight with your shoulders down and back away from your ears, feet flat on the floor.
2. Inhale and raise your arms parallel to the floor, palms facing downward.
3. Exhale and gently twist to the right from your waist. Keep both hips planted in the chair. Hold for 1 – 3 breaths.
4. Inhale and return to center. Repeat on the other side.
5. Repeat 3 – 5 times.

Seated Twist on Floor (Version 3)



Instructions:

1. Sit on a mat or towel with your legs straight in front of you.
2. Keep your left leg straight. Inhale.
3. Exhale. Bend your right knee and cross your right foot over the left leg. Inhale.
4. Keeping your right hand on the floor behind you for support, exhale and rotate the torso. Place your left elbow on the outside of your right knee. Press gently.
5. Hold for 3 – 5 breaths. On an exhale, return to starting position and repeat on the other side.

Seated Cat/Cow (Version 1)



Instructions:

1. Sit up straight, drawing your shoulders down and back away from your ears, head in line with your spine, feet flat on the floor.
2. Place both hands on your thighs.
3. For Cow, inhale and lift your chest and chin, and slightly arch your back; keep your shoulders down and back away from your ears.
4. For Cat, exhale and pull your belly button inward toward your spine, rounding through your upper back and shoulders; tuck the chin in toward your chest.
5. Slowly move from Cow to Cat to complete one repetition.
6. Perform several rounds of Cat/Cow, holding each position for 1 – 3 breaths.

Cat/Cow on the Floor (Version 2)



Instructions:

1. Come onto the floor on hands and knees.
2. For Cow, inhale and lift your head, chest and tailbone toward the ceiling, allowing your stomach to arch toward the floor.
3. For Cat, exhale. Press into the floor to round your back up toward the ceiling. Tuck your tailbone under and tuck your chin into your chest.
4. Slowly move from Cow to Cat to complete one repetition.
5. Perform several rounds of Cat/Cow, holding each position for 1 – 3 breaths.

Seated Child's Pose (Version 1)



Instructions:

1. Sit up straight with your shoulders down and back away from your ears. Inhale.
2. Exhale and bend forward at the hips. Rest your torso on your thighs, letting your head and arms hang loose.
3. Hold for 3 – 5 breaths, then slowly return to the starting position.
4. Repeat several times.

Note: Widen your legs to make more room for your body.

Child's Pose on Floor (Version 2)



Instructions:

1. Start from a kneeling position on the floor; buttocks resting on your heels. Inhale.
2. Exhale. Allowing the back to round, slowly walk the hands forward, keeping your arms slightly bent.
3. When arms are fully extended and torso in a comfortable position, allow your forehead to rest on the floor. Continue pressing your buttocks toward the heels of your feet.
4. If extended arms cause discomfort, draw the arms down by your sides, resting on the floor.
5. Hold for 3 to 5 breaths or longer.
6. On an inhale, slowly return to starting position.

Note: Widen your knees to make more room for your body.