

YOGA THERAPY

Head to Toe

All yoga poses are therapeutic but there are some specific techniques which work on key movement patterns that are essential to relieve pain, tension and stress from over, under or misused muscles. These easy self-massage techniques target key areas and trigger points that penetrate deep into the muscle to bring relief, improve posture and enhance performance – bringing your body back into balance



Local Yoga Tune Up and Yoga Therapy teacher Liz Terry describes a few of her favourite techniques, starting at the neck and moving all the way down to the feet, offering a well-rounded sequence that will open various parts of the body.

You will need: A pair of Yoga Tune Up Therapy Balls or two hard balls, 2 blocks, yoga mat, strap and sturdy Mexican blanket or something similar.
Release, relax, breathe and enjoy...

(NOTE: The recommendations are only a guide, not mandatory. If you have pain in a specific area of your body, work on that area more, and if the pain lingers, see a healthcare professional.)

NECK RELEASE

Lie on your back. Place the balls in their tote and onto a block. Place the toted balls against the occiput muscles at the base of the skull and move your head in a 'yes' motion 3-5 times. Then move your head in a 'no' motion from side to side 3-5 times. Final movement: taking the head in an infinity-type movement incorporating the 'yes' and 'no' movements together forming a sideways figure 8.

BENEFITS: Releases tension in the neck. Can help relieve headaches and pain in the neck.

RECOMMENDED: 3 times a week.

UPPER TRAPS & SHOULDER BLADES

Place the Yoga Tune Up Therapy Balls against the ridge of the shoulder blades, a bit further away from the spine. Lift the head and the hips, and roll up and down the spine from the traps/upper shoulders to the base of the shoulder blades. Take 10-12 breaths as you move forward and back along the shoulder blades, slowly.

BENEFITS: Releases the tissues and muscles through the upper back and shoulder blades. Has the ability to relieve headaches, release tension in the upper traps, and prevent potential injuries in the shoulders and back.

RECOMMENDED: Once a day.



UPPER BACK AND OUTER SHOULDER STRETCH

Lie down on your belly and lift the chest as you take your left arm underneath your right. Square the shoulders and allow the weight of your body to sink towards the floor. Take the right hand and place it under your forehead like a pillow. Take 10-12 rounds of breaths. Switch sides.

BENEFITS: Releases tension in the upper back and shoulder tissues as well as in the muscles. Reduces stress and relieves pain in the area.

RECOMMENDED: 1-2 times a week.

SERRATUS ANTERIOR

Come onto your side with knees bent. Place one block on the second height. Place the top edge just beneath your armpit, you'll feel the block against your ribcage. Rock your body forward and back rolling over the tissues and muscles in this area.

BENEFITS: The Serratus Anterior is a strong shoulder stabiliser and mobiliser. By keeping it strong through plank and other movements, and by releasing it through this technique, you can take a load off the neck and rotator cuff muscles.

RECOMMENDED: 1-2 times a week.



QUADRATUS LUMBORUM (& LOWER BACK) RELEASE

Lie on your back and grab a block. Place it on the second height and on end just next to the right of the spine. Hold the block in place as you melt your hips down to the floor, allowing for the block to pull the skin away from the spine. Take 10-12 breaths. Switch sides.

NOTE: Make sure the block does not land onto the spine itself, and is on the side.

BENEFITS: *If the QL is overworked due to weak erector spinae muscles along the spine (this can happen due to chronic sitting), pain can be felt in the lower back. Releasing the lower back and QL muscles can relieve lower back pain.*

RECOMMENDED: *Once a week.*



HIP FLEXORS

Grab two blocks. Place one against the wall. Lie on your back. Bend your knees and place your right foot onto the block. Slide your body back keeping your foot on the block. Once your right leg is straight and your foot is pressing into the block, lift your hips and place the other block underneath your sacrum. As you continue to press your right foot into the block against the wall, hug your left thigh into your chest. You should feel a nice stretch in your left thigh and hip-flexors. Take 8-10 breaths, switch sides.

BENEFITS: *By keeping your bottom leg connected to the wall via the foot pressing into the block, you're allowing your body to go deeper into the stretch while keeping your joints safer than if the leg was dangling down onto the ground.*

RECOMMENDED: *Once a week depending on how much you sit. The more you sit, the more you should do this.*

By keeping your bottom leg connected to the wall via the foot pressing into the block, you allow your body to go deeper into the stretch





IT BAND, OUTER HIPS AND THIGHS

Grab two blocks and come to stand. Place one block on the floor and step your left foot on the block with the right foot next to it. Fold forward with a flat back, taking care of your spine on the way down. Place the other block underneath your hands. Straighten both legs. Take 3-4 breaths here with spine lifted. Lean your hips to the left and walk your arms and torso to the right as you stretch into the left outer hip and thigh. Take 5-8 breaths here. Slowly come back to the centre, bend both knees and rise up with a flat back. Take it to the other side.

BENEFITS: Releases tension in the outer hip, piriformis, hamstrings and the IT band.

RECOMMENDED: Once a week.



CALVES

Fold the blanket in half the long way and then in half the other way to have a rectangular shape. Then roll the blanket length-wise. Come onto all fours and place the roll behind the knee creases as much as possible, sit back and take 10-15 breaths. Once you release, stretch the backs of your legs in Down-Dog.

BENEFITS: Releases the connective tissues of the calves and hamstrings, creating space in the knees. Brings fresh blood flow to the surface of the skin.

RECOMMENDED: 1-2 times a week.



LIZ TERRY is the Founder of SATYA FLOW YOGA. She is an energetic Vinyasa & Yin Yoga Teacher (eRYT500) who takes her classes beyond the image of what yoga is 'supposed' to be, and encourages her students to define yoga in their own way.

She began teaching in 2009 and has been practicing yoga consistently since 2005. Yoga has taken Liz all over the world, landing currently in Dubai. She also hosts retreats all over the world. Liz is one of the Middle East's leading yoga teachers in bringing YogaWorks, one of the world's top Yoga Teacher Trainings, to Dubai all the way from Los Angeles.

Liz will be holding her next Yogaworks Teacher Training from February to May, 2016 at Zen Yoga. For more information go to www.yoga.ae



pose

This stretch works on the ankles and the top of the feet. Do it 2-3 times a week



ANKLES

Sit on your shins and the top of your feet. Grab both your blocks and place them behind you, shoulder width apart on the lowest height. Lift your chest and lean back placing hands on the blocks. Stay here, or lift the knees up for a deeper stretch.

BENEFITS: Stretches the ankles and the top of the feet.

RECOMMENDED: 2-3 times a week.



TOES

Sit on your mat with the strap in your hand. Make a small loop with the strap and place the loop around your ankles to gently bring the ankles together to touch. Wrap the strap a few more times to hold the feet in place. Come onto all fours, and tuck the toes under. Sit your butt back towards your heels. Either keep your hands on the mat if it's already stretching your feet, or sit up onto the heels. Take 8-10 slow and deep breaths.

BENEFITS: Stretches the soles of the feet and the toes, lengthens the Achilles and keeps many joints in the feet healthy.

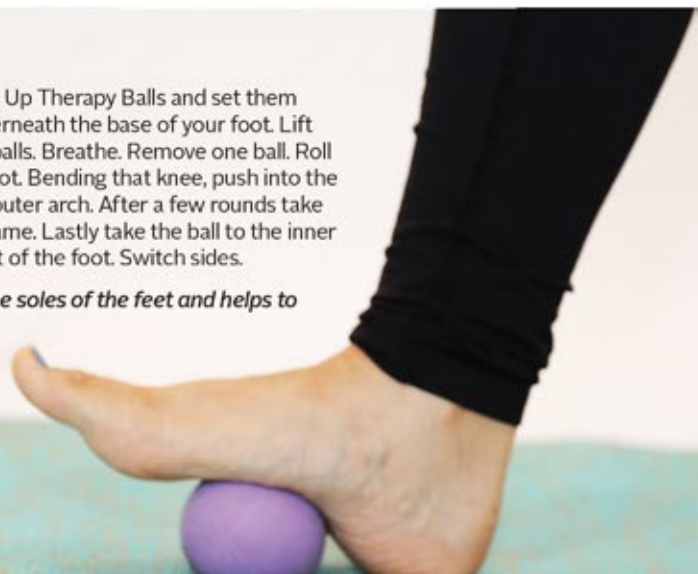
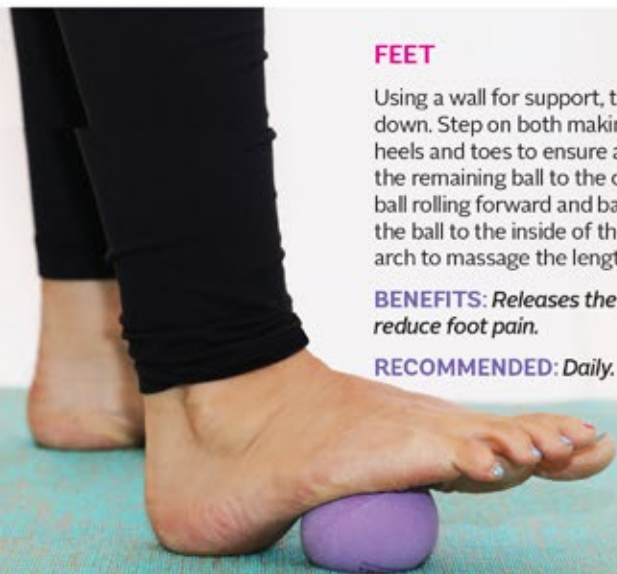
RECOMMENDED: 2-3 times a week.

FEET

Using a wall for support, take your Yoga Tune Up Therapy Balls and set them down. Step on both making sure they're underneath the base of your foot. Lift heels and toes to ensure all weight is on the balls. Breathe. Remove one ball. Roll the remaining ball to the outer edge of the foot. Bending that knee, push into the ball rolling forward and back, massaging the outer arch. After a few rounds take the ball to the inside of the foot and do the same. Lastly take the ball to the inner arch to massage the length of the medial part of the foot. Switch sides.

BENEFITS: Releases the plantar fascia in the soles of the feet and helps to reduce foot pain.

RECOMMENDED: Daily.



pose

This stretch works on the ankles and the top of the feet. Do it 2-3 times a week



ANKLES

Sit on your shins and the top of your feet. Grab both your blocks and place them behind you, shoulder width apart on the lowest height. Lift your chest and lean back placing hands on the blocks. Stay here, or lift the knees up for a deeper stretch.

BENEFITS: Stretches the ankles and the top of the feet.

RECOMMENDED: 2-3 times a week.



TOES

Sit on your mat with the strap in your hand. Make a small loop with the strap and place the loop around your ankles to gently bring the ankles together to touch. Wrap the strap a few more times to hold the feet in place. Come onto all fours, and tuck the toes under. Sit your butt back towards your heels. Either keep your hands on the mat if it's already stretching your feet, or sit up onto the heels. Take 8-10 slow and deep breaths.

BENEFITS: Stretches the soles of the feet and the toes, lengthens the Achilles and keeps many joints in the feet healthy.

RECOMMENDED: 2-3 times a week.

FEET

Using a wall for support, take your Yoga Tune Up Therapy Balls and set them down. Step on both making sure they're underneath the base of your foot. Lift heels and toes to ensure all weight is on the balls. Breathe. Remove one ball. Roll the remaining ball to the outer edge of the foot. Bending that knee, push into the ball rolling forward and back, massaging the outer arch. After a few rounds take the ball to the inside of the foot and do the same. Lastly take the ball to the inner arch to massage the length of the medial part of the foot. Switch sides.

BENEFITS: Releases the plantar fascia in the soles of the feet and helps to reduce foot pain.

RECOMMENDED: Daily.

