

Never too Old for Yoga

Yoga and meditation are great ways of feeling better in your body and mind and coming to understand yourself more, whatever age you are when you start. A lot of people think you have to be strong, flexible and have great balance to do yoga. That's not true – you can start with any level of fitness and flexibility. In fact, yoga is great for older people because it can be very gentle and low impact. And there is a meditative aspect of the postures and a nurturing of the spirit that many people over 50 begin to appreciate.

This routine will help build strength and improve balance in a way that's challenging but safe. Work at your own pace, and if there's anything that you don't feel you can do, just skip to the next pose. Focus on your breathing as you do the yoga, taking deep, even breaths. As long as you can breathe, you can do yoga. If you take even one full, focussed breath, you are taking steps to help yourself feel better. Enjoy this sequence!

Note: if floor based exercises are too much, try the Chair Yoga handout.

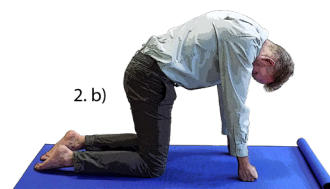
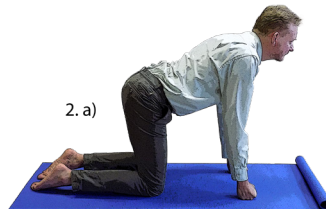
1. Child Pose

Rest like this for 10 deep breaths.



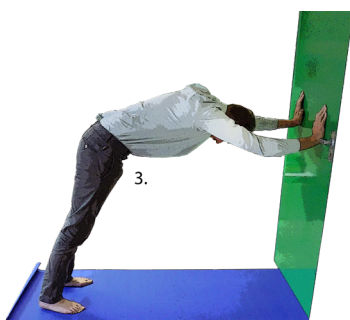
2. Happy Cat, Angry Cat

Flow between these movements, breathing in as you lift your head up and out as you arch your back. You can rest on your fists like this, or on flat hands if that is easier. Do this 10 times.



3. Down Dog Against the Wall

Stay like this for 5 deep breaths, feeling the stretch in your back and legs.



4. Warrior 1 Against the Wall

5 breaths each side. If you like, step away from the wall and lift your arms in the air.



Never too Old for Yoga (cont)

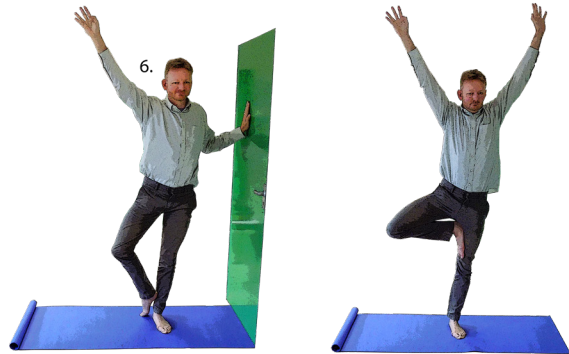
5. Warrior 2 Against the Wall

5 breaths each side. If you like, step away from the wall and have both arms out straight (but keep the same leg positions).



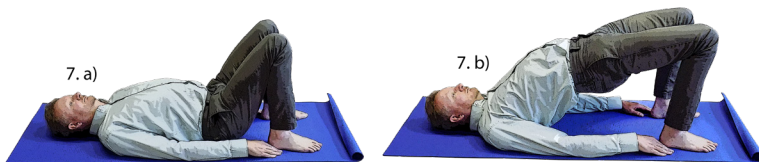
6. Tree Pose

5 breaths each side. As your balance improves, you could take the foot up higher on the supporting leg, either to the calf or thigh (avoid the knee though).



7. Moving Bridge

Flow between these positions a few times, breathing out as you lift your hips. Hold with your hips in the air for a few deep breaths.



8. Legs Up the Wall

Lie like this for as long as you want – at least 20 breaths.



9. Rest

Relax completely, focussing on your breathing. Stay like this for five minutes, or longer if you like.



10. Sitting

Sit upright, on a chair or your bed, and count each out-breath. Once you reach ten, start again from one. When your mind wanders, gently draw it back to the breath. Do this for five minutes, or longer if you like.

