

Chair and Wheelchair Yoga

Chair Yoga involves the practice of gentle movements for the three different sections of the torso, arms, legs, awareness of each side of the body (coordination) and awareness of upper and lower body (head to feet). This practice helps to induce the energy flow throughout all the bodily systems including skeletal, muscular, respiratory, circulatory, digestive, nervous and eliminatory.

Chair Yoga is simple to learn and practice, and can be enjoyed by all, regardless of age and fitness. It helps participants to access the physical ability to grow in strength, flexibility and stamina, and to feel refreshed, alert, energised, open and relaxed.

It is also suitable for long-term wheelchair users who can develop poor posture, where the spine tilts forward, the shoulder girdle falls forward and the arms rotate inward. The hips stiffen, the internal muscles inside the pelvic girdle and eliminatory organs become sluggish, and the ball joints on either side of the hips stiffen, and the legs atrophy.

The idea of Chair Yoga is to promote healthy movement, strength and joint mobility, with flowing movements for the body, while allowing the natural energy to flow freely throughout the body. This will tackle areas of weakness, tension and inflammation.

Sitting for a long time in a wheelchair, the muscles stay put, side-by-side without movement. They can no longer slip and slide along each other, which reduces movement, range of motion and flexibility that leads to stiffness and joint pain.

Good or poor posture is a result of habits and conditioned reflexes. Since muscles, connective tissue and fascia* determine the position of our bones, we can consider the body as a structural entity that can be shaped, changed and aligned. The body is, in effect, plastic by nature. By improving the body's posture by regularly moving and aligning the breath and body, it allows the fascia to distribute evenly and in alignment.

When the body is centred and in alignment the muscles become strengthened, well-toned and elastic. Chair yoga will help improve bad posture and increase skills and performance once users improve their posture and achieve good body movement.

Regular practice of Chair Yoga not only realigns the way the body naturally moves. It also helps to cleanse the body and improves the bodily functions, increases flexibility, strength and stamina with greater sense of wellbeing!

*. Fascia is the elastic connective tissue that covers the muscles.

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