

FIT LIFE

5 Bedtime Yoga Poses to Relax and De-Stress

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Do you ever come home from a long day of work and find it challenging to relax? Perhaps you find yourself occasionally having staring contests with the ceiling while lying in bed because you have a long list of tasks to complete the next morning? If so, incorporating a few restorative [yoga poses](#) prior to bedtime may be just what you need to help de-stress your body and relax your mind.

Yoga is a form of exercise that focuses on breath and awareness, while physically lengthening the body. Restorative yoga is a gentler style of yoga and focuses on muscle relaxation and a steady-state breath. In addition, it engages the parasympathetic nervous system to decrease stress, muscle tension and fatigue.

This style of yoga is effective prior to bed because the state of being or lying in a comfortable position allows the mind to detach from worry and stress. To make your experience more comfortable, use a pillow to support the head and body, and be sure lie on a carpet, towel or blanket.

Here are two methods you can use to determine the length of time you spend in each pose:

Timed Method: Hold each position for one to three minutes.

Awareness Method: Hold each position for as long as you feel comfortable. Move to the next pose when you are ready.

Use these five blissful yoga poses to enjoy relaxation from the comfort of your home.

Pose: Downward Dog on the Couch



Purpose: This all-around, amazing position lengthens the body including the chest, back, glutes and back of thighs (and is particularly good for desk jockeys).

How to get into it: Place hands on the edge of a couch, or other elevated surface, and position feet shoulder-width apart. Walk your feet several inches backward and start to push the hips back while lowering the upper body. The torso should remain parallel to the floor.

Pose: Supine Pigeon



Purpose: This restorative hip opener lengthens the gluteals and external rotators of

the hip, and can help relieve sciatic nerve compression and pain.

How to get into it: Lie on your back with your head and neck resting on a pillow. Place both feet on the floor. Cross your right leg over the left and gently place your left foot on the couch, or other elevated surface. Place your hands on the inner thigh and calf. Take a few deep, soothing breaths and then maintain a steady-state breath as you hold the pose.

Pose: Supported Spinal Twist



Purpose: To open the hips, lengthen the chest and relieve spinal tension.

How to get into it: Lie on your back with a pillow supporting your head and neck. Place your feet on the floor and a pillow between your inner thighs and calves. Slowly lower your legs to the right and adjust your arms to a comfortable position. Start with three to five deep breaths and continue a steady-state breath. Repeat on the other side.

Pose: Supported Reclining Butterfly Pose



Purpose: Lengthens the inner thighs, groin and chest.

How to get into it: Place three pillows in a triangle-like position. Lie on your back with your head and neck resting on one of the pillows. Place your feet to the floor and gently open the legs away from the body, allowing the legs to rest on the pillows.

Pose: Legs Up the Wall Pose



Purpose: This passive, restorative pose calms the mind, relieves mild back and leg tension, and gently lengthens the back of the thighs.

How to get into it: Sit on the floor with your right hip close to the wall. Begin to recline the torso to the ground while you simultaneously bring your right, then the left, leg up on the wall. Move the hips into a comfortable position, usually closer toward the wall. Allow your arms to lie on the ground near shoulder height. Close your eyes and maintain a steady-state breath. To increase the comfort of this pose, place a pillow behind your head and neck.



By Elizabeth Kovar

Elizabeth Kovar M.A, personal trainer and yoga/fitness instructor, earned Yoga Alliance 318 hours in Ashtanga yoga & Chakra Meditation from the Ayurveda & Yoga Retreat and Hospital in Coonor, India. She studied yoga in five different countries, and learned through some of the best names in the yoga industry. Her Master's Thesis "Creating Yoga Programs for People with Movement Disabilities" was implemented on a 12 week research study for people with Stage 1-2 Parkinson's Disease with the University of Toledo Physical Therapy and Neurology Department. She resides in Seattle, WA and is the fitness coordinator at the City of Lynnwood Recreation Center. Elizabeth is also a freelance fitness / travel writer, workshop presenter and instructs an online Yoga 1 & 2 course for Walla Walla Community College. Questions or comments can be directed to erkovar@yahoo.com