

9 PROGRESSED YOGA HIP OPENER POSTURES



Yoga is an ideal form of exercise to open tight and stiff hips. Tight hips typically result from sedentary lifestyles or, conversely, from overuse during sports and other activities. Although the cause varies, people typically experience tightness in one or more areas of the hip. The poses described below focus on specific areas of the hip including:

- Anterior muscles - quadriceps and iliopsoas group
- Posterior muscles - gluteus maximus and hamstrings group
- Adductor muscles - adductor brevis, adductor longus, adductor magnus and gracilis (inner thighs move the legs toward the body and help stabilize pelvis)
- Abductor muscles - gluteus minimus and medius, piriformis and tensor fascia latae, (moves the leg away from the body and stabilizes pelvis in gait and single-leg exercises)

If you've progressed from the basics, try these progressed yoga hip

openers to lengthen all areas of the hip. Hold each pose for approximately 30 seconds. Be sure to relax the jaw and maintain a deep, long and steady breath.

LOW LUNGE WITH FOOT TO HAND



Focus: Anterior muscles

How to Perform: Place the left leg forward and bring the right shin to the ground. Move the torso and pelvis forward to a low-lunge position. Place the right hand on the ground and rotate the chest toward the inner thigh. Bend the right knee and bring the foot closer to the body. Place the left hand on the foot and hold. Option: Bring the right hand toward the right foot. Repeat on both legs.

LIZARD



Focus: Posterior and anterior muscles

How to Perform: Place the left leg forward and bring the right shin to the ground. (Similar to a low-lunge position.) Walk the left foot several inches away from the body. Place the hands on the right side of the left leg. Lower the torso and place the forearms on the ground. Lift the right knee off the floor and hold. Repeat on both legs.

CHAIR POSE WITH ANKLE TO THIGH



Focus: Abductor (lateral) muscles

How to Perform: Stand tall and slightly lower the legs into a chair position. Lift the right leg and place the ankle just above the left knee on the thigh. Lower into a chair pose. Hands can either stay on the shin or reach outward. Repeat on both legs.

SIDE ANGLE POSE



Focus: Posterior and adductor (inner) muscles

How to Perform: Stand with feet 3 to 4 feet apart. Turn the left toes outward and the right foot at 45-degrees. Lift the arms to shoulder height and lower the knee to a 90-degree angle. Reach the left arm forward toward a block or the floor. Keep the chest facing forward and reach the right arm over the head (biceps above ear). Repeat on both sides.

REVOLVED TRIANGLE



Focus: Adductor

How to Perform: Stand with feet 3 to 4 feet apart. Turn the left toes outward and the right foot at 45-degrees. Lift the arms to shoulder height and reach the left arm toward the shin or floor (regular triangle pose). Rotate the body toward the shin and support the right hand on the shin, block or floor. Rotate the torso toward the inner thigh and reach the left arm overhead. Hold and repeat on both sides.

THREE-LEGGED DOWNWARD-FACING DOG WITH BENT KNEE



Focus: Posterior and anterior muscles

How to Perform: From all fours, curl the back toes underneath and lift the body into a downward-facing dog. Lift the left leg into the air and bend the knee to 90 degrees. Rotate the pelvis toward the left, “opening” the hips (hips will not be squared). Hold and repeat on the opposite leg.

PIGEON POSE VARIATION



Focus: Abductor and anterior muscles

How to Perform: From downward-facing dog, position the body into a plank and bring the left knee forward. Place the left shin on the ground and maintain a squared pelvis. Bend the right knee and draw the right foot toward the body. Grab the right foot with the right hand. The left hand will be in front of the shin to help an upright position with the torso. Hold and repeat on the opposite leg.

DOUBLE PIGEON



Focus: Abductor muscles

How to Perform: Sit on the ground and place the left shin on the ground, parallel to the pelvis. Stack the right shin on top, ankle above the knee and knee above the ankle. Maintain a neutral spine. For a more challenging position, hinge forward from the hips and place the hands on the ground as the torso folds forward.

FROG



Focus: Adductor muscles

How to Perform: From an all-fours position, place the inner shins on top of towels or a blanket that are several feet apart (or to your point of flexibility.) Turn the toes away from the body. Walk the hands and torso forward and position the forearms on the ground. Allow the upper body to relax in the pose to stimulate the stretch in the inner thighs.



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