

Summer Heat Sequence

Level: all levels

This sequence is designed to counter the effects of summer heat. It will stimulate the parasympathetic nervous system which will, in turn, rehydrate and rejuvenate the mind and body. The sequence is suitable for all levels, just leave out Salamba Shirshasana I (Head Stand) if you have not yet been taught it.

The Parasympathetic Nervous System

The sympathetic nervous system governs the fight or flight response. When the individual is under stress, the sympathetic nervous system activates, the heart rate and blood pressure increase along with several other physiological changes, including increased oxygen consumption, all of which have evolved to help you get away as fast as possible from that predator breathing down your neck. The parasympathetic nervous system induces a different set of reactions that evolved to quiet the body. After all, once you are out of the predator's reach, you need to be as still as possible so that it will not find you. Over-stimulation of both systems in such extreme situations over extended periods of time can be deleterious to the body. However, the relaxation response of the parasympathetic nervous system can be harnessed to calm, replenish and rehydrate the body, which is what we are aiming at here.

Whereas the nerves of the sympathetic nervous system emanate along the full length of the spinal column, the nerves that deal with the parasympathetic response only emerge in the cranial (joint between skull and neck) and sacral (pelvic) regions. In order to stimulate these two areas we will be paying special attention to Jalandhara Bandha (chin lock) and to the sacrum.

The Sacro-Iliac (SI) Joint

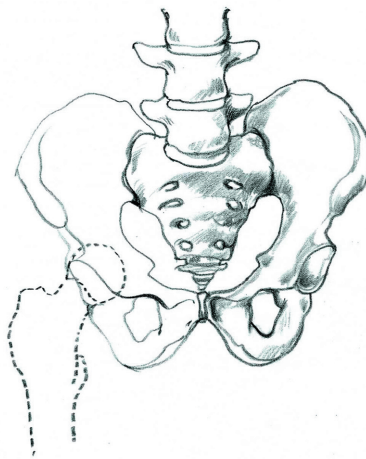
As you can see from the illustrations, the sacrum and the ilia (pelvic bones) are wedged together at what is called the sacro-iliac (SI) joint. These two joints (one on the left side, one on the right) are not particularly mobile, but there is a certain amount of movement which may or may not be perceptible to you as you practice.

Let's look at what happens to the SI joints when performing forward and backward extensions, both of which are included in the sequence.

In a forward extension, such as Uttanasana (Intense Stretch Pose), the sitting bones spread and the hip bones come together. The lower pelvic bones broaden away from each other and the upper pelvic bones spread, resulting in a broadening of the lower part of the SI joint and a compression of the upper part.

Do not be misled by any sensation in the the lower back. In a forward extension, the lower back rounds and broadens, causing the muscles there to elongate, which is not the same thing. The action in the sacrum is relatively subtle and you may not feel anything at all.

In a backward extension, such as Supta Virasana (Reclined Hero Pose) it is important to maintain length in the lower back lest the lumbar curvature be exaggerated, creating compression



The Pelvis and Sacrum

in the lower back muscles and the discs between the vertebrae. In order maintain this length the instruction is often given to lengthen the tailbone or sacrum towards the heels or knees. This effectively tilts the pelvis back. The sitting bones come together and the hip bones separate. The lower portion of the SI joint compresses while the upper portion broadens. This is how, by including supported forward and backward extensions in the sequence, the lower parasympathetic nerves are toned and stimulated.

Jalandhara Bandha

The “chin lock” action of Jalandhara Bandha is useful on many levels, both subtle and gross. Aside from the energetic effects of the rising energy flow being redirected back down towards the heart center, the heart and lungs are supported and toned, as are all the blood vessels and nerves that connect to them. The tilting of the skull and the

stretch of the back of the neck tone and stimulate the cranial parasympathetic nerves.

Notice the progression of the poses with regards to the upper back and neck. Initially the head is supported in the reclined poses, allowing the muscles to release. In the standing forward extensions, where the top of the head is supported, the release in the upper back and neck can deepen as the jaw muscles in the front are able to release with the inversion of gravity on the jaw bone.

Both the inversion of the body relative to gravity and the effort necessary to maintain Salamba Shirshasana I (Head Stand) help increase muscle tone and blood flow to the Jalandhara Bandha area. In the poses following this, the back and chest are lifted and the head is supported allowing the neck to release once again while the upper back, heart and lungs continue to be toned. Following that we have a series of poses that involve a proper chin lock, both in an active and passive mode. And finally, in Shavasana (Corpse Pose), the whole body is returned to a neutral state.

The Sequence

Notes:

- Except where noted, hold all poses for 2-5 minutes, according to your capacity.
- Please note that the illustrations are merely memory prompts for the particular pose. Read the text for prop variations.
- Women who are menstruating should omit the inverted poses: Shirshasana, Sarvangasana, Halasana.
- Omit the following poses and pranayamas until you have achieved competence in them in class: Salamba Shirshasana I (Head Stand), Ujjayi II and Viloma II.
- “JB” refers to Jalandhara Bandha (Chin Lock).

pose

props

instructions

notes










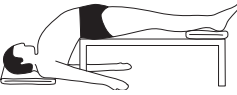
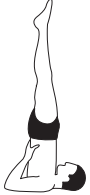

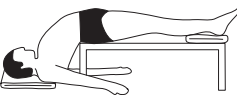
Supta Baddha Konasana
(Reclined Bound Angle Pose)

- Bolster
- Belt
- Blanket
- 2 Blocks/Blankets

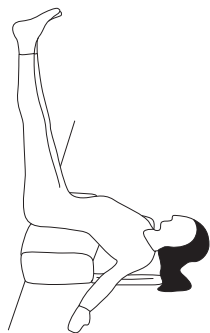
- Bolster as pictured
- Belt legs
- Blanket under head
- 2 Blocks or blankets under thighs
- Clasp elbows with arms overhead
- Lengthen sacrum to heels

- Lower SI compresses
- Upper SI Broadens
- JB is neutral

pose	props	instructions	notes
 <p>Supta Virasana (Reclined Hero Pose)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bolster • Belt • Blanket 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bolster or other support under trunk • Belt thighs • Blanket under head • Clasp elbows with arms overhead • Lengthen sacrum to heels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower SI compresses • Upper SI Broadens • JB is neutral
 <p>Supta Padangusthasana II (Reclined Big Toe Pose) leg extended out to side</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bolster • Belt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bolster under thigh • use belt to hold foot if needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower leg: lower SI compresses • Raised Leg: upper SI compresses • JB is neutral
 <p>Uttanasana (Intense Stretch Pose)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blocks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support head on blocks • Pull thigh bones up into hip sockets • Gently lift shoulders up off ears • Release back of neck • Settle head into block 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upper SI compresses • Lower SI Broadens • JB: upper back engaged, neck soft
 <p>Prasarita Padottanasana I (Wide Spread Feet Pose) full pose with head on floor (not shown)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blocks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support head on blocks if needed • Pull thigh bones up into hip sockets • Gently lift shoulders up off ears • Release back of neck • Settle head into block 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upper SI compresses • Lower SI Broadens • JB: upper back engaged, neck soft
 <p>Salamba Shirshasana I (Head Stand)</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draw shoulder blades into back and lift shoulders off wrists • Roll sacrum up to heels • Stretch legs strongly up towards ceiling • Hold for 3-5 minutes or longer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower SI compresses • Upper SI Broadens • JB: upper back is strongly engaged
 <p>Supta Virasana (Reclined Hero Pose)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bolster • Belt • Blankets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bolster under trunk crosswise so head falls back • Belt thighs • Blanket under head and elbows • Roll sacrum to heels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower SI compresses • Upper SI Broadens • JB: thoracic spine is lifted and chest is open

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 <p>Supta Baddha Konasana (Reclined Bound Angle Pose)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bolster • Belt • Blanket • 2 Blocks/Blankets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bolster under trunk crosswise so head falls back • Belt legs • Blanket under head • 2 Blocks or blankets under thighs • Clasp elbows with arms overhead and supported • Roll sacrum to heels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower SI compresses • Upper SI Broadens • JB: thoracic spine is lifted and chest is open
 <p>Setu Bandha (Bridge Pose)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wall • Belt • 2/3 Blocks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Block against wall • 1 or 2 blocks under sacrum, feet on block at wall • Belt thighs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower SI compresses • Upper SI broadens • JB: engaged softly
 <p>Salamba Sarvangasana I (Shoulder Stand) restorative variation on chair</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chair • Mat • 2 Blankets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fold mat and place on chair • Fold blankets for under shoulders • Hold for 3-5 minutes or longer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower SI compresses • Upper SI broadens • JB: engaged vigorously
 <p>Halasana (Plough Pose) restorative variation on chair</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chair • Mat • 4 Blankets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fold mat and 2 blankets, place on chair • Fold 2 blankets for under shoulders (use previous set-up) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upper SI compresses • Lower SI Broadens • JB: engaged vigorously
 <p>Setu Bandha (Bridge Pose)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bolster • Block • Belt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recline over bolster • Belt thighs • Rest feet on block • Hold for 3-5 minutes or longer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower SI compresses • Upper SI broadens • JB: engaged softly

pose	props	instructions	notes
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Viparita Karani Mudra
(Inverted Action Pose)

- Wall
- Bolster

- Hold for up to 10-15 minutes
- After 3-5 minutes begin pranayama:
- Ujjayi II (5 mins)
- Viloma II (5mins)

- Pelvis neutral
- JB: engaged softly



Shavasana
(Corpse Pose)

- Bolster
- Blanket

- Bolster under trunk
- Blanket under head
- Hold for up to 10-15 minutes

- Pelvis neutral
- JB: neutral