



## Yoga for Cyclists! From Bike to Mat: Developing Flexibility, Core Strength, and Focus

Yoga is for everyone, especially cyclists who are hunched over their handle bars for long periods of time. This type of posture - coupled with the repetitive nature of cycling biomechanics - can create physical imbalances that a yoga practice can help address. Here are five categories of yoga poses that can address the unique needs of cyclists by promoting flexibility, strength, and focus:



**Forward Fold** - Forward bends are a great way to stretch out the hamstrings and calves while providing a release to the lower back and spine. These poses may be performed standing or seated. One of the most popular is downward facing dog pose (adho mukha svanasana), a standing forward fold and one of the foundational yoga poses. Dog is considered an 'active resting' pose, and it's great for releasing tight areas such as calves, hamstrings, and shoulders, as well as stretching the back and strengthening the arms and legs. It's also considered an inversion (your head is lower than your heart) and promotes circulation to the upper body.



**Hip Opener** - To counteract tightness in the lower back and hip area, 'hip opening' yoga poses can help loosen tight hips, improve range of motion and circulation, and alleviate lower back pain. Popular poses are low lunge pose (anjaneyasana) and tree pose (vrksasana) which are both wonderful for cyclists. In addition to opening up and releasing the hips, these postures also require focus and balance which promotes the connection between breath and concentration.



**Spinal Twist** - Yoga poses that incorporate a twist are a good way to relax the back and alleviate pain throughout the entire spinal column. The simple reclined supine twist (supta matsyendrasana) is one of the best solutions out there for many types of low back pain and can give a good stretch to the glutes, chest, and obliques.



**Chest Opener** - To counteract the effects of 'hunched forward' cycling posture, try 'chest opener' poses such as bridge pose (setu bandha sarvangasana) to stretch the chest, neck, and spine and cobra pose (bhujanghasana) to stretch shoulders and hip flexors.



**Core Strength** - Yoga can also help develop core strength to keep the lower back strong and healthy. Poses to try include the plank pose (phalakasana) and the side plank pose (vasisthasana) - which are also good for arms and shoulders, as well as boat pose (navasana) that targets the abs and hip flexors.



And as you practice ... don't forget to breathe! That's really yoga's magic ingredient ... smooth, steady, diaphragmatic breathing. This kind of deep breathing engages the parasympathetic nervous system and promotes a calm mind and present moment awareness.

If you'd like to give yoga a try, check out your local yoga studio or the many wonderful yoga videos on YouTube\*. There are many different styles of yoga - you're sure to find one that is perfect for you. See you on the mat!

\*Disclaimer: Check with your health care provider before engaging in an exercise program such as yoga to make sure it's safe for you.

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## About the Author



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