

GETTING BODY BACK IN BALANCE

BY KAITLYN VITTOZZI

Do any of these apply to you? Check all that apply.

- o I sit most of the day
- o I exercise at least three days per week
- o I love practicing yoga
- o My hips feel tight
- o I have knee pain

If none of these do, please email me. I want to know what your day looks like! For the rest of us, if you're working from home there is a good chance you're doing more sitting which can make your thigh muscles tight and weak. If you are active – running, cycling, doing yoga (like warrior or chair poses) or doing squats and lunges – those muscles can end up tight and strong.

The muscles on the fronts of your thighs are a group of four, called the quadriceps or quads. Tight quadriceps can lead to knee pain. The muscles on the backs of your thighs – the hamstrings – can do the same, but it seems like nine times out of ten when I see people stretch after a workout, the first thing I see them do is reach for their toes. That is great, keep stretching. But reaching for your toes only stretches the hamstrings and not the quads. Hence our focus for this article.

Opening the muscles on the front (anterior side) of your body has an

effect not just physically but potentially emotionally, mentally, and energetically; in part because we rarely do it. Many of us, while sitting, have our front body covered up, likely by a desk, table, or screen right now. Dare I even say hunched over. If you are on the more active side, many of us gym rats spend a whole lot of time strengthening the front side of our body. Remember “ready

picture Broadway. A performer on stage standing up tall with feet wide apart, arms outstretched, jazz hands. Total confidence.

Now while the overly hunched or tense postures may be extremes, if you are somewhere in the middle it could be that your quads just need a little wake up. It can be a difference experience to feel what it feels like to have those muscles be soft enough to be accessible to you.

Here are some yoga postures to try that could benefit you physically and energetically, and help you move and feel better. If you have had tight quads for a while, these could help. Honestly, I love this sequence, it almost always makes me feel better.

As always, check with your doctor before beginning any exercise program. Cleveland Clinic's definition of chronic pain is pain that

lasts longer than six months – but if you are in pain for that long (or I may argue even less) do not hesitate to go to see a specialist to make sure there is nothing else going on beyond your musculoskeletal. Your body might be trying to tell you something. Are you cleared? Then try these.



position” from Phys Ed class? Think quads engaged, ready to run or jump. Our thigh muscles also get a lot of blood flow when we are stressed – preparing for our fight or flight response. That serves its purpose at times, but do we always want to be that tight and ready to go? When I picture the opposite of both of those positions – hunched or tense – I



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I also like that these postures contain elements of balance. When anything in our body is overly tight or weak – including our mental state – it is hard to balance. Needing to balance can also make your muscles come online faster, instead of letting you fall over, they wake up quickly. You can hold each of these poses for a few breaths, working your way up to ten long breaths. Anytime we are doing static holds with our quads, it can be incredibly uncomfortable – but nothing here should be painful. On a scale of one to ten, sensation somewhere between a five and a ten will do; no need to be at the overstretched 10. If you are experiencing knee pain back off. Also notice if your foot is moving too far to the side of your leg.

Remember to breathe.

1. Hand-to-Big-Toe Pose Variation. This will probably feel more like strengthening than stretching. You can absolutely do this standing with one hand on a wall or chair for balance. Stand on your right leg, lift your left knee up. If you feel proficient here, extend the left leg straight. Switch sides.

2. Speedskater. Step your feet out wide. (If you extend your arms out wide, your ankles can line up about underneath your wrists.) Bring your hands to the ground or a chair. Keep the right knee and toes pointing in the same direction

as you bend the right knee and keep the left leg straight. Hold for five to ten breaths. Keep both hips in line with one another. Switch sides.

3. Low Lunge. If I’m on a hard floor



or a thin yoga mat, I like to cushion my knee here. From kneeling, step the right foot forward (get your heel on the floor). Keep roughly a right angle in both knees. Press your left thigh forward. If this comes easily, think about tucking your tailbone under slightly. Switch sides.

4. Half frog. Lying on your stomach, bring your left arm across the top of your yoga mat. Kick your right heel to your right glute. Hold your ankle with your right hand if you can. Advanced option for those of you with more flexibly shoulders: Bring your right hand to the big toe side of your right foot, bend your right elbow, and lift your right shoulder and elbow up and to spin your right palm forward over the top of your right foot. Switch sides.

5. BONUS. King Arthur’s Pose. This one can be quite intense. If you’re struggling in three and four, work there for a while, because this one can definitely lead to that charley horse sensation. Come back to your low lunge with your right foot forward with some padding under your left knee, kick your left heel to your leg glute, and hold it with your hands if you can. If you cannot catch the foot, it will be more active hamstring strengthening which can also be a wakeup call for the low body. Still, remember to breathe. Switch sides.

There is no perfect sequence out there! Check in with yourself and see if you feel good, better or worse after this. To schedule a yoga therapy session with Kaitlyn visit TozziYoga.com, or call (585) 200-7209 for a no-risk phone consultation.

