

## Yoga for kids

### Benefits of yoga

- Research has shown that a single yoga session can help reduce anxiety in teens diagnosed with cancer (ages 13–18) and parents of children diagnosed with cancer.<sup>1</sup>
- Yoga performed bedside has been shown to reduce pain in children diagnosed with sickle cell disease and tumors.<sup>2</sup>
- Yoga may positively affect complex mental functions of the pre-frontal cortex, including execution of complex functions and planning abilities.<sup>3</sup>
- Yoga postures and deep breathing can improve strength and flexibility, increase circulation of oxygen in the body, promote oxygen uptake, and increase hormone functions.<sup>4</sup>

All ages benefit from yoga. Postures incorporated in yoga are derived from movements that children naturally do. Younger children enjoy pretending to be different types of animals. Older children are able to add yoga to healthy lifestyles, develop self-esteem, and increase personal awareness.

Try a few of these basic yoga activities with your child. You should always be present when your child is practicing yoga. Doing these yoga poses together is a great way to spend quality time with your child. Ask your child's doctor if you have any questions about whether or not your child should practice yoga.

### Breathe

Breathing is the basis of yoga. It is important to use slow, deep, rhythmic breathing to relax the nervous system.<sup>1</sup> This means your child should be breathing from the belly, and his shoulders should not move up and down.

1. Rest comfortably: Either sit cross-legged with palms on knees facing up or lie on your back with legs straight, arms near your sides, and head relaxed.
2. Take a deep breath in. Watch as your belly rises and fills up with air, same as blowing up a balloon.
3. Blow the air out of your belly like deflating a balloon and watch as your belly empties.
4. Do this 5–7 times.



*This document is not intended to take the place of the care and attention of your personal physician or other professional medical services. Our aim is to promote active participation in your care and treatment by providing information and education. Questions about individual health concerns or specific treatment options should be discussed with your physician.*

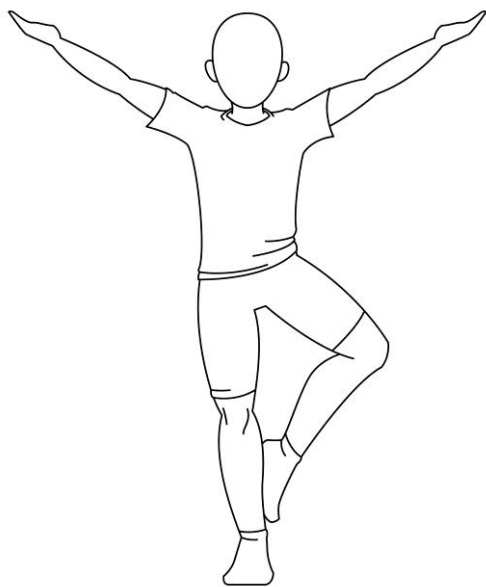
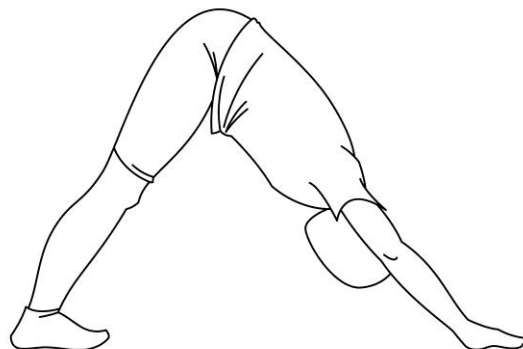
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### Poses

Praise your child for practicing yoga at a level that is comfortable for him. Yoga is intended to be a positive experience that challenges your child by strengthening his body and relaxing his mind. Poses should be held for 10–15 seconds. However, a child should be encouraged to work within his abilities and to stop a pose if it causes pain.

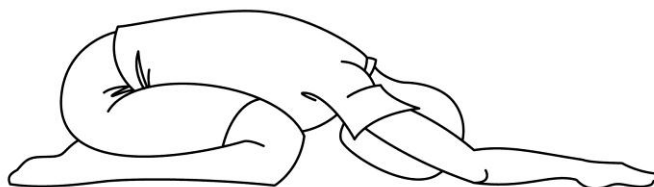
#### Down Dog

1. Begin on all fours (feet and hands), just like a dog!
2. Straighten knees so that your hips and tail go up toward the sky
3. Look down at the ground below you and hold for 10–15 seconds.
4. Take a break whenever you need to.



#### Tree

1. Plant both feet on the ground like the trunk of a tree and cross your arms across your chest.
2. Slowly bring one foot up and rest your foot on your ankle. If your balance is good, try moving your foot toward the knee of your straight leg.
3. When your balance is strong, lift both hands up above your head and stretch them out wide like branches of a tree. Reach up and try to reach for the leaves.
4. Keep looking straight ahead and hold for 10–15 seconds.
5. Take a break whenever you need to. Now try it with the other leg.



#### Child's Pose

1. Begin by kneeling and sitting on your feet with knees facing forward. Knees should be far enough apart so that your belly can rest comfortably on them.
2. Bring arms up above your head, then reach forward as far as you can. Bend at your waist and reach arms all the way out until arms and forehead are on the floor.
3. Take deep breaths in and relax, making sure your forehead stays on ground, arms are reaching forward, and you are still sitting on your feet.

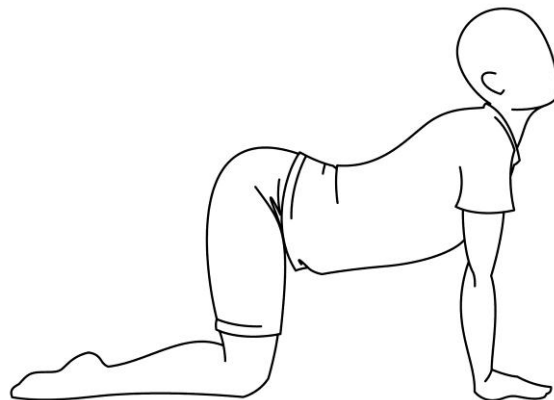
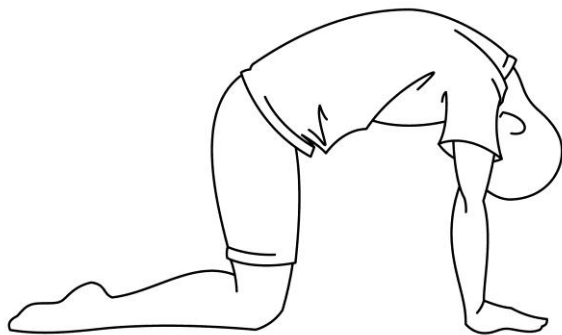
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# Do you know... *continued*

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### Cat/Cow

1. Begin on all fours (knees and hands) with knees under hips, hands under shoulders and back straight like a table.
2. While taking a deep breath in, look up to the sky and lower belly toward ground and curve your back downward like a cow.



3. As you exhale arch your back up toward the sky like a cat and look down.
4. Repeat this sequence 10–15 times. Take a break whenever you need to.

### Questions?

If you have questions or concerns about your child doing yoga, please talk to your child's doctor or call Rehabilitation Services at 901-595-4319.

### Sources:

1. Thygeson MV, Hooke MC, Clapsaddle J, Robbins A, Moquist K. Peaceful Play Yoga: Serenity and Balance for Children With Cancer and Their Parents. *Journal of Pediatric Oncology Nursing* 2010; 27(5) 276–284.
2. Moody K, Daswani D, Abrahams B, Santizo R. Yoga for Pain and Anxiety in Pediatric Hematology-Oncology Patients: Case Series and Review of the Literature. *Journal of the Society for Integrative Oncology*, 2004; 8(3) (Summer), 2010: p. 95
3. Manjunath N, Telles S. Improved performance in the Tower of London test following yoga. *Indian Journal of Physiology and Pharmacology*, 2001; 45(3),351- 354.
4. Parshad O. Role of yoga in stress management. *West Indian Medical Journal*, 2004; 53(3), 191-194.

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