**Top 10 Body Strengthening Yoga Poses**



Yoga has often been largely misunderstood to be a body stretching regime that only women take up to stay in good shape. While [yoga](http://www.artofliving.org/in-en/yoga) does make one’s body supple, there is more to this ancient technique than meets the eye. When we speak of ways of building body strength, the instant visual that pops up in the head is of a gym with people sweating out lifting heavy weights. One doesn’t necessarily have to lift heavy weights in the gym to increase the body strength. Taking up yoga is another simpler alternative to building body strength while retaining the body’s flexibility.

Before diving into the ways in which yoga can increase your body strength, let’s first lay out a few guiding principles on how to approach yoga postures in the context of strength training:

**Yoga is NOT stretching.**

Or rather, it is not stretching as you may think of “stretching.” There are tons of articles out there telling you not to “stretch” or why static stretching will decrease performance. Most yoga postures, by contrast, are a series of focused and intense contractions coupled with specific breathing patterns that yield gains in flexibility, mobility, and strength.

**Use Yoga on active rest days or after your training session.**

In order to utilize yoga postures for the purpose of gaining strength and increasing performance, practice them after your training session so that your body has at least 24 hours to recover from the poses. Although yoga is restorative, it is still a very intense physical practice (when you want it to be) and your body, especially your nervous system, needs time to recover from it.

**The Top 10 Essential Body Strengthening Yoga Poses**

Specifically, these postures will mobilize your hamstrings, decompress your vertebra, assist in relieving inflammation caused by a tight IT band, and allow for deeper hip flexion and rotation. They will also increase your ability to maintain thoracic extension in both seated and squatting positions. And the reduction in lower back pain is a nice little bonus too.

[**#1. Trikonasana (Triangle pose)**](http://www.artofliving.org/in-en/yoga/yoga-poses/triangle-pose-trikonasana)

**Primary Musculoskeletal Benefits:** Aids in developing and deepening the hip hinge movement pattern.

Practice of this asana improves the flexibility of the spine, corrects alignment of  the shoulders, relieves backache and flatulence, massages and tones the pelvic organs, corrects the effects of a sedentary lifestyle or faulty posture, reduces stiffness in the neck, shoulders and knees, strengthens the ankles and tones the ligaments of the arms and legs.

This asana stimulates the nervous system and alleviates nervous depression, strengthens the pelvic area and tones the reproductive organs.

**#2. Utthita Parsvakonasana (Extended Side Angle pose)**

**Primary Musculoskeletal Benefits:** Increases mobility in hip flexion and external rotation.

Side Stretch Pose strengthens the back and relieves general backache. It can help with various problems of the back and spine including displacement of the spinal discs, arthritis of the lower back, dorsal spine and shoulders, lumbago and sciatica.

It also develops the chest and strengthens the legs. Include it in your practice to cure bronchitis, strengthen weak ankles and weak or deformed legs. It also deals with tight hamstrings, knee problems and flat feet.

[**#3. Adho Mukho Svanasana (Downward Dog pose)**](http://www.artofliving.org/in-en/yoga/yoga-poses/downward-facing-dog-pose-adho-mukha-svanasana)

**Primary Musculoskeletal Benefits:** Lengthens and mobilizes the entire superficial back line while decompressing the spine. It also benefits ankle mobility and Achilles tendon.

This asana stretches the shoulders, legs, spine and whole body. It builds strength throughout the body, particularly the arms, legs, and feet. It also relieves fatigue, rejuvenates the body and calms the mind.

**#4. Parsvattonasana (Low Pyramid pose)**

**Primary Musculoskeletal Benefits:** Improves overall posture and balance – internal and external.

This asana stretches and strengthens the hips, hamstrings, shoulders, spine and wrists.

[**#5. Veerbhadrasana (Warrior pose)**](http://www.artofliving.org/in-en/yoga/yoga-poses/warrior-pose-virbhadrasana)

**Primary Musculoskeletal Benefits:** Thoracic extension coupled with shoulder and hip flexion.

This asana strengthens and stabilizes the muscles of the feet and knees. It also strengthens the shoulders, arms, and the back. Further, it improves balance and concentration.

**#6. Supta Matsyendrasana (Reclined Spinal Twist)**

**Primary Musculoskeletal Benefits:** Deep thoracic rotation while calming the central nervous system.

This asana is helpful in alleviating stiffness in your lower back and hips, toning your abdomen and improving your digestive system. It also helps in relieving and toning your abdomen.

**#7. Gomukhasana (Cow pose)**

**Primary Musculoskeletal Benefits:** Stretches butt muscles.

This pose is an amazing recovery tool after sessions with a high volume of hip-hinging movements. It extends the latissimus dorsi and also opens the chest.

**#8. Kapotasana (Pigeon pose)**

**Primary Musculoskeletal Benefits:** Facilitates a much deeper hip opening.

This pose helps alleviate lower back pain in most cases. It also strengthens the groin and the back and increases hip flexibility.

**#9. Parivrtta Ajaneyasana  (Low Lunge with Quad Stretch Variation)**

**Primary Musculoskeletal Benefits:** Lengthens quadriceps while assisting deep knee flexion.

This pose also improves thoracic rotation, strengthens the quadriceps and gluteus muscles, and develops stamina in thighs and hips.

[**#10. Utkatsana (Chair pose)**](http://www.artofliving.org/in-en/yoga/yoga-poses/chair-pose-utkatasana)

**Primary Musculoskeletal Benefits:** Exercises the spine, hips and chest muscles.

This asana also tones the thigh, ankle, leg and knee muscles.

Practice makes a man perfect. And the same rule goes for strength training. Practice these 10 yoga poses regularly to build up your body’s strength while keeping it as flexible as a toddler’s body.