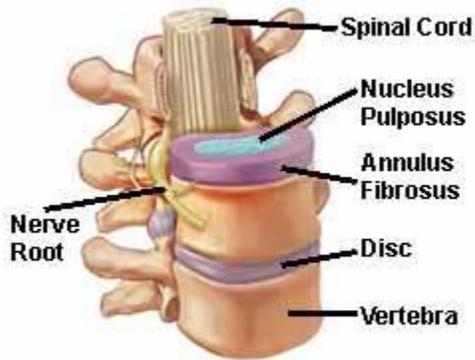


SLIP DISC CONDITION and HOW YOGA PRACTICE CAN HELP

Discs are made up of concentric circles or rings of fibrous material with a tough gelatinous center. When cracks or fissures occur in the fibrous rings, the gelatinous material in the center can begin to push out. A number of different factors may cause the disc to "slip". Factors that precede the pain and symptoms of disc injury include disc dehydration, and too much load on the disc. Discs depend on water to keep their height and perform efficiently. When we're young, discs have their own circulation that helps keep them hydrated. As we get older, this circulation ends and the spine must move so that water can be drawn into the discs. If discs become dehydrated and lose their height, they become more vulnerable to cracks and fissure.



In our yoga practice, there are 2 actions which allow the Spine to lengthen so that there is space created between the vertebrae and the discs – Poses that provide TRACTION for the spine and SPINAL TWISTS which bring healthy blood flow (re-hydration) into the discs. A student suffering from Slip-Disc Condition should of course provide an x-ray to his/her physical therapist or yoga instructor for a better understanding of their individual condition. In general, the regular practice of lengthening the Spine and practicing Twists will keep the discs healthy and supple.

The "slipped" disc can be a slight, even temporary, push against the nerve or the spinal cord, or it can be a more definite mild, moderate, or marked bulge. Herniated discs occur when a fragment from the central part of the disc breaks completely through the fibrous rings. Whatever the category of disc bulge, the low back pain, leg pain, and muscle spasms require examination and a period of conservative, non-surgical care (Chiropractic adjustments, Acupuncture treatment, Physical therapy, etc), prior to consideration of a stabilization program through the practice of Yoga. And then one must choose poses designed to lengthen and create space in the vertebral column. Yoga students ready to undertake a strengthening yoga practice should always consult with their health care provider: Medical Examiner, Chiropractor, or Osteopathic practitioner in advance and arrange for an individual session with a qualified

Iyengar Certified (preferably) Yoga Instructor. Once the awareness of the individual disc concern is understood, the yoga student may join a yoga class and proceed slowly with deepening their awareness of their unique Spine. **The following is a general Yoga practice recommended for Lengthening the Spine and Spinal Twists to help maintain Disc Health:**



TADASANA – The Mountain Pose- Stand with the weight in the feet spreading wide throughout the whole foot – Observe the “Tri-Pod” base of the Feet – Weight centered in the big toe, outer edge of little toe, and the heels. From this awareness in the feet- draw a Vertical Line up through the center of the legs – through the Spine and out the crown of the head. Visualize each and every vertebrae lifting up and separating one from the next. In this practice, use the Breath – Send a deep in and out breath into each and every vertebrae and into the space between the vertebrae where the discs are lifting. A light, unencumbered feeling will follow. Begin to notice if there is a part of the back that feels “heavy” or compressed and bring lightness with the breath to that part. A teacher or yoga partner can observe whether your hips and shoulders are even. Align the head so that it is perched lightly and directly over your pelvis. As you align the bones of the Spine, the surrounding (Erector Spine) muscles and connective tissue will relax and lengthen rather than gripping or overworking and the vertical lift will begin to feel effortless.

just below the creases should be legs and lift the backs of both ultimate Spine



ADHO MUKA SVANASANA -Downward Facing Dog Pose – Start kneeling in the middle of your mat in Cat Pose. Spread wide the fingers and keep the elbows very straight. Use a belt elbow creases for support to keep the elbows from bending or hyperextending. The elbow facing each other. Tuck under the toes of the feet, and with Exhalation breath, straighten the weight of the pelvis. Stretch the whole Spine vertically up, Lift the tailbone, stretch open the knees. Try to bring the heels all the way down to the mat. The **Core Lift** is the key is this Lengthening Pose. The Spine is continuously lifting up and out of the hands – Lift the

Tailbone – Lift the Pelvis – Lift the backs of the legs. Send deep exhalation breaths through the backs of the legs. Students with tighter hamstrings may use a chair to place the hands, rather than placing the hands on the floor, this will decrease the intensity of the hamstring stretch, allowing more ease for the spine to lengthen.



PARVSVOTTANASANA - Intense Side Stretch – Stand in the middle of the mat with feet 3 - 4 feet apart. Turn the right foot parallel to the mat pointing forward, and turn the back (left) foot in about 60 degrees. Place 2 blocks on either side of the forward foot. Hold the hipbones as you turn the pelvis to be squared off facing the forward leg. Hips, Knees and feet should all be parallel. On exhalation breath, bend at the hip joints at the same time lengthening both sides of the torso. Keep the Whole Spine lengthening parallel to the floor and breathe deeply into the vertebral column lengthening.

bone-over-bone. Kneel in the Cat breath, lift the pelvis up into out into the belt keeping the parallel to the floor and the back is



HALF VERSION – FULL ARM BALANCE – For Strengthening the Erector Spine Muscles of the Back- Place a tied belt (the measurement of the forearms) around the forearms just below the elbows. This will keep the elbows straight – Pose, with both feet close to the wall and the toes tucked under. On exhalation Downward Facing Dog Pose. Feel the support of the belt and resist the forearms elbows very straight. Walk the feet up the wall until the backs of the legs are parallel to the wall. Let the head hang freely and lift the weight of the pelvis and

the legs up using the strong muscles of the back and elongate the spine. The **Core Lift** is to lift the spine up and Vertical against the pull of gravity. Hold 5 –10 deep breaths. Walk the feet down the wall to come down and rest in Child’s Pose.



SUPPORTED HEADSTAND - with the use of 2 chairs. Place a yoga mat on the floor parallel to the wall. Bring 2 folding chairs (or other simple straight edged chair) to the wall on the mat with the 2 chairs facing each other, about 6 – 8 inches (15 – 20 cm) apart. The sides of the chairs should be resting at the wall. The mat placed below the chairs on the floor will keep the chairs stable. Place the hands on the sides of the chair and let the head drop into the space between the seats of the chairs. Bend the knees and let the hips rest back at the wall. Slowly straighten both legs up and rest the legs against the wall behind. Squeeze the inner thighs together to come into the quiet still midline. Flex the feet, pointing the toes down toward the floor to receive a greater stretch to the backs of the legs. Let the head hang freely. This supported headstand variation allows the beginning student to practice balance in inversion without any danger to compressing the neck. Practice the **Core Lift** through the center of the Spine lifting up!

Dandasana is the Tadasana of sitting poses. For beginners, or the sitting bones slightly rotation at the tops of the inner toward you. It is also helpful toes toward the chest. Lift the shoulders to hang down from



DANDASANA - Sitting Staff / Rod Pose

the Sitting Poses series. It is the foundation, the beginning of awareness in those with tightness in the backs of the legs, use a rolled up mat to sit on, lifting higher than the heels. Stretch the legs straight forward with a slight inward thighs. Keep the kneecaps lifting and push out the heels, pulling the toes back to bring a belt on the tops of both feet and holding with both hands, pull the spine up vertically using the strong muscles of the back. Allow the inner the ears.



BADDHA KONASANA – Bound Angle Pose

Sit on the edge of a folded mat, bring the heels together as close to the perineum as possible. Keep both heels actively pushing into each other. The spine must be completely vertical engaging the strong muscles of the back to lift. Hold the big toes of both feet with both hands and pull outward, at the same time keeping the heels equally pushing in to each other - right and left. Again there is a slight backbend at the top of the spine, but take great care to lift the front and back of the waist evenly. Relax the eyes and gaze forward. All the while, the **Core lift** is engaged as you visualize the vertebrae lifting up easefully.

Twist – From Dandasana, bend the sole and heel of the right extended forward in one straight the calf touching the thigh. far forward of the right shin. swing the left arm around the can be used as an extension of hands. Turn the spine to the left Keep the eyes soft. Exhale to move deeply into the twist. Hold 5-10 deep breaths. Repeat on other side.



MARICHYASANA I - Asana dedicated to the sage, Marichi –Sitting the right knee and bring the right foot up close to the perineum. Press foot down to the floor. The left leg should remain grounded and line. The shin of the right leg should be perpendicular to the floor with Stretch the right side of the chest forward bringing the right shoulder as Turn the right arm around the right shin. Bend the right elbow and back at the level of the waist to clasp the right hand at the wrist. A belt the arms to catch the ends of the belt if not yet ready to interlock the keeping the whole spine lifting up. Look back over the left shoulder.



ARDHA MATSYENDRASANA

Pose dedicated to Lord of the Fish – Sit in Dandasana with a rolled mat to elevate the sitting bones. Extend the right leg forward. Remember to maintain the inward rotation at the top of the inner right thigh. Bend the left knee until the left shin is perpendicular to the floor. Bring the right side of the chest around to the left so that the right shoulder reaches beyond the left knee. Bend the right elbow and swing the left arm around the back to interlock the hands behind you

at the level of the waist. Again, a belt is a very good tool to use to help bring the arms around left shin.

Keep the Spine lengthening up vertically as much as possible. Look back over the left shoulder and deepen the twist as the exhalation breath deepens. Hold 5-10 deep breaths. Repeat on other side.

Complete this Yoga practice with 5 minutes in **SAVASANA –the Corpse Pose** allowing the Spine to relax – Visualize the space created between all the vertebrae and the discs and breathe into that space. Release all the effort everywhere and allow the brain to be still.