

ACU-YOGA FOR SWIMMERS



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ACU-YOGA is health maintenance exercise system, that is both preventive and restorative, that integrates traditional Yoga asanas (positions) with the holding of Acupressure points. Both YOGA (originating in India) and ACUPRESSURE (originating in China) produce similar benefits:

- relaxation of muscular tension
- elimination of energy blockages and toxins from the body
- balancing the vital life forces of the body

By intertwining classic Yoga with the power of Acupressure, the benefits each system is optimized and amplified producing maximum benefits for time invested in this self care practice.

ACU-YOGA was created and developed by Michael Reed Gach, founder of the Acupressure Institute in Berkeley, California. For over 30 years, Michael has practiced, taught, and written about this unique form of Yoga. As a result of studying with Michael, I revitalized my personal yoga practice, which I began in 1975.

I selected this set of exercises SPECIFICALLY for swimmers as a pre swim warm up or post workout relaxation.

PRECAUTIONS TO CONSIDER

- If you have no prior experience with yoga, and/or your body is inflexible and not accustomed to being stretched, it is strongly advised that you begin practice under supervision with the guidance of a skilled yoga practitioner or instructor.
- If you have a prior history of low back problems or previous joint injuries, you must approach Acu-Yoga very gently and avoid (or modify) positions that might aggravate prior injuries or weakness.
- If you have a history of hypertension, caution is urged with the plow position as it temporarily increases blood pressure. It is also recommended that a yoga blanket be used to support the neck area in this position.
- If you start to become light headed or experience pain while doing any of these exercises, stop the exercise immediately, assume the deep relaxation position, and begin gentle rhythmic breathing until the dizziness or pain subsides.
- When holding points in the various positions, apply pressure in a slow, rhythmic manner with gentle to moderate finger pressure. Do not press in a forceful, jarring, or abrupt manner.
- Lymph areas (groin, throat below ears, outer breast near armpit) should only be touched lightly and not pressed due to sensitivity.

SHERMAN'S TOP 7 YOGA POSES FOR SWIMMERS

1. BENT KNEE STRETCH WITH ROOT LOCK (Mulabandha)

Key Acu-Points activated:

CV 1 and Acu-points along sciatic nerves



Stretch and breath tips:

1. From a straight leg sitting position on the floor, bend your right knee placing the right heel between the genitals and rectum (CV 1).
2. Take hold of the left leg, inhale, and straighten the spine.
3. As you exhale, lower your torso (with spine straight) as close to the leg as possible. Breathe deeply for 30 seconds. With each exhalation: draw the anal sphincter muscle in, contract the urethral tract, and pull abdomen toward the back (ROOT LOCK). Release as you inhale. This powerful contraction unites the yin and yang meridians and channels dormant energy at the root up to the higher chakras.
4. Reverse legs, bending the left knee, and extend down over the right leg and repeat

2. YOGA MUDRA

Key Acu-Points activated: B 36



Stretch and breath tips:

1. Sit on your heels with one foot's instep in the arch of the other
2. Lower your head to the ground on an exhalation
3. Interlock the fingers (palms facing) behind your back
4. Inhale and slowly raise the arms straight up. Breathe deeply for 30 to 60 seconds while holding position.
5. Exhale and slowly lower the hands to the floor (palms up). Relax in this position for at least a minute while letting the breath return to normal.

3. MODIFIED BRIDGE POSE (with emphasis on tightening the glutes)

Key Acu-Points activated: CV 1, SI 10, TW 15, GB 21



Stretch and breath tips:

1. Lie on the back, bend both knees, and place soles flat on the floor.
2. Put both arms above the head, inhale and tighten the glute muscles while arching the pelvis up. Hold for several seconds.



3. Exhale as you slowly come down. Continue inhaling up, while tightening the glutes, and exhaling down for one minute.
4. Relax on your back for a few minutes (eyes closed) while the breath returns to normal. Roll your head from side to side to release any tension from the neck.



4. PLOW POSITION

Key Acu-Points activated: Bladder Meridian

Stretch and breath tips:

WARM-UP: Prior to initiating the plow, use single and double leg raises to prepare. Raise one leg as you inhale. Point and flex the foot then rotate the foot both directions stretching the ankle. Lower leg on an exhalation. Repeat with other leg/foot. Raise both legs. Point and flex both feet then move into the Plow.

1. Start by lying on your back (with head and neck supported with a yoga blanket or rolled towel), legs straight, and hands at side.
2. Inhale deeply. As you exhale, raise your legs up and over the head bringing your feet as close to the floor as your body allows.



3. Reach the hands back to grab the toes (or ankles) and let the body relax while breathing deeply for 30 to 60 seconds.
4. Bring the arms back to the floor and support the legs as you slowly return the legs back to the floor, letting each vertebrae touch, one at a time as you unroll.
5. Relax on your back for a few minutes (eyes closed) while the breath returns to normal. Roll your head from side to side to release any tension from the neck.



5. SIDE TO SIDE

Key Acu-Points activated: Neck points and Thyroid Gland

(NOTE: This stretch is a great warm up before Shoulder Stand and Plow as well as useful during relaxation following those positions.)

Stretch and breath tips:

1. Lie on the back in a comfortable position. Exhale as you slowly turn the head to one side and inhale as you return to center. On the following exhalation, slowly turn your head to the opposite side and inhale as you return to center. Continue the breath and movement pattern for about a minute while you gently stretch the neck.



6. LOCUST

Key Acu-Points activated: Spleen 12 + 13 Stomach 29 + 30



Stretch and breath tips:

1. Lying face down on the floor, place both fists in the valleys of the groin, with your chin or forehead on the floor.
2. Inhale and raise the legs up and off the floor with feet together. Breathe deeply for 30 seconds. Gradually extend the time as you practice and become more comfortable in the pose.
3. Slowly, let the legs come down, rest your head to one side, and deeply relax for a couple of minutes to obtain optimal benefit.



7. DEEP RELAXATION

Key Acu-Points activated: CV 6 and the 8 Regulatory Channels



Stretch and breath tips:

- 1. Lie on your back, eyes closed, for at least 7 - 10 minutes at the end of this series. Use Hara breathing (focusing the breath on CV 6 -- 3 fingers below the naval) to nourish the internal organs. Let the belly expand out on inhalations and draw completely in on exhalations.**
- 2. Let your body and mind totally RELAX to reap the benefits of the potent Acu-Yoga sequence you have just completed.**

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**Tom Sherman, Ph.D, LMT, CHTP (aka Chakraman), holds his Ph.D. in Organization Development, has completed post doctoral study in ecopsychology, is a licensed Massage Therapist, and an Energy Healer with certifications in Healing Touch, Acu- pressure, and Acu-Yoga. Tom began swimming in 1955 when he was 5 years old and Yoga in 1976. He continues to practice both today.**

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