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half eagle

Half Eagle Pose is a pose that focuses on the upper body and the entire shoulder area, including the shoulder joints. It involves winding the forearms around each other, thereby stretching deeply into the ligaments and tendons of the shoulder joints. The Full Eagle Pose (see page 72 in Chapter 5, The Balancing Series) is a little more challenging and includes both the upper body Half Eagle position and a balancing posture that involves winding one leg around the other. (Don't worry if this sounds too difficult; there are variations for beginners.) In many yoga classes, it's common practice to teach the upper part (Half Eagle) separately, particularly if the class is at beginner level. For the purposes of our Shoulder Series, we will be focusing on the Half Eagle and the terrific benefits it provides.

THE STEPS

1. Standing Mode: Stand in Mountain Pose to ground and prepare. **Sitting Mode:** Sit on a chair or stool, with your back straight.

2. Take 3 rounds of the 3-Level Breath.

3. Wrap both arms around your torso at mid-chest height (as if hugging yourself), placing the left arm on top of the right.

4. Lift both forearms upright in front of you and wind the left forearm around the right as if you were winding a strand of wool around a knitting needle. Aim to bring your palms together in prayer position (or as close together as possible).

5. Now you're in the pose. As you *inhale*, lift your upper chest and elbows slightly. As you *exhale*, gently nudge the elbows down towards the floor, stretching deeply into the your left shoulder joint.

Note: Tendons and ligaments are tough and sinewy and take longer to stretch than muscles, so make sure you move and breathe very slowly.

6. Continue *inhaling* and *exhaling* slowly for 3–6 breaths

7. On your last *exhalation*, unfurl your arms and return to Mountain Pose if you're standing, or place your hands on your knees if you're sitting. Take a moment to integrate the stretch and notice the difference between the right and left shoulder joints.

8. To switch sides, repeat Steps 3 through 7, placing the right arm on top of the left, and winding the right forearm around the left.

recipe 4



TOP 5 BENEFITS

- Stretches ligaments and tendons connected to the shoulder joints
- Improves shoulder flexibility and range of motion
- Releases muscle tension across the mid and upper back
- Increases circulation, improving the body's ability to detoxify
- Improves focus and concentration

LEVEL



TIME 2–3 minutes

PROPS A chair or stool if sitting

OFF-THE-MAT SUGGESTIONS

- Sitting in bed or in the bathtub
- While watching TV
- Sitting in the car before driving or after you've parked your car
- In a waiting room or reception area
- At the beach, in a park, or any other public place where you feel comfortable exercising

CONTRAINDICATIONS

Certain rotator cuff conditions; recent or chronic shoulder or wrist injuries or surgery


squats at the kitchen sink


Squatting is one of the most primal (primitive and basic) positions for the human body. Many indigenous people around the world still squat to attend to their daily chores. Women in primitive cultures squat to give birth. Squatting is a completely natural position for young children, but as we age and lose the flexibility in our hips, we also tend to lose the ability to squat. It's for this reason that I've adapted this classic hip opener to be practiced holding on to your kitchen sink. In addition to loosening tight hips, this pose will give your spine, back muscles, and shoulder joints a great workout.

I recommend making this pose a daily habit, especially if you sit or stand for long periods of time and/or are involved in sports like cycling, skiing, running, or golf. Once you taste this recipe, you'll find your body craving this delicious stretch, so go ahead and indulge. Who knows, one day you may find yourself squatting on the kitchen floor peeling potatoes!

THE STEPS

1. Stand in Mountain Pose to ground and prepare.
2. Take 3 rounds of the 3-Level Breath.
3. Hold on to the edge of the kitchen sink, with your hands shoulder-width apart. Make sure you can hang on securely without slipping. Slip on a pair of rubber (kitchen) gloves if you need extra grip.
4. Step back 1-2 feet from the sink and place your feet hip width apart, with toes turned out slightly.
5. Bend your knees and slowly lower your torso, hips, and buttocks down towards the floor. Keep your chin level, or look up slightly if it's more comfortable. Relax your facial muscles and jaw.

 If your heels don't touch the floor, place a rolled-up towel, blanket, or cushion underneath your feet for support, or balance on the balls of your feet.
6. As you *inhale*, draw the breath upwards to fill and expand your mid and upper back, and as you *exhale*, move your knees outwards to stretch your inner thighs. Keep your shoulders relaxed.
7. Repeat for 3-6 breaths, depending on your Chili level.
8. On the last *inhalation*, slowly pull yourself up to standing and as you *exhale*, release the arms to your sides and relax your shoulders back and down.
9. Return to Mountain Pose.

 If you are able to squat without holding on, step your feet hip width apart, squat down to the floor, bring your palms together at your heart centre, and firmly press your elbows against the inside of your knees. Breathe in this position for 3-6 breaths.

recipe 3



TOP 5 BENEFITS

- Opens and loosens tight hip joints, promoting flexibility, stability, and increased range of motion
- Stretches and lengthens inner thigh muscles
- Relieves discomfort and pain in lower back
- Strengthens knee and ankle joints
- Loosens tight shoulder joints

LEVEL



TIME 1-3 minutes

PROPS Rubber gloves for extra grip at the sink, rolled-up towel, blanket, or cushion for underneath the feet if the heels don't touch the ground and you need support.

OFF-THE-MAT SUGGESTIONS

- At your bathroom sink or countertop
- At your desk at home or at work
- Holding on to a secure handrail or banister
- Standing at the window with hands on the windowsill
- Any tabletop or flat area

CONTRAINDICATIONS

Recent back, hip, or knee injury or surgery; some rotator cuff conditions