

Urdhva Dhanurasana: inverted bow pose

Back bends stimulate the nervous and circulatory systems and tone the whole body.

Medical benefits:

Backbends work on the spine and chest. They help reduce general backache and can keep in check arthritis of the lower back, dorsal region and shoulder joints and hunchback.

Upward Bow helps those with asthma, breathlessness, bronchitis, chest, chill, cough and tonsillitis.

When included in a balanced practice, Urdhva Dhanurasana also brings relief for those with colitis, diabetes, tight hamstrings, (umbilical) hernia, impotency, kidney problems, lumbago, menstrual problems, hemorrhoids, prostate problems and a displaced and painful coccyx.



1. Lay on your back with your knees bent. Place your hands under your shoulders with your fingers facing your toes.



2. Raise your pelvis. Raise your chest and place the crown of your head on the floor. Suck your shoulder blades and your back ribs firmly into your back. Don't let your elbows swing out – they should be shoulder width apart.



3. Pushdown through your hands and feet and push up into the pose. Raise your heels and lift the trunk higher.



4. Move your tailbone deep into your pelvis and place your heels on the floor.

PRACTICE NOTE:

This pose is for intermediate students only. Learn the basics of yoga in a beginner's class first so that your body is toned and strong before embarking on back bends such as this.



Before practicing back bends, warm up first with some standing poses.

Urdhva Mukha Svanasana (Upward Facing Dog Pose) also works well to get the spine moving prior to backbends.