

10 Living Well with Epilepsy

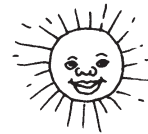
Yoga for epilepsy

Yoga benefits our bodies and our minds. It is one of the pillars of traditional Indian medicine. Yoga has been around for thousands of years, long before antiseizure medicines were invented.

Yoga's exercises view the body, breath, and mind as connected, rather than seeing them as separate. Creating this feeling of connectedness by practicing yoga every day helps build self-reliance and strength, which is especially useful when a seizure happens.

A person doing yoga is working on several things at once. Yoga involves:

- Movement and poses that stretch body parts, build strength, and improve balance. Yoga is a great addition to activities like walking, swimming, or cycling.
- Breathing with a specific purpose or objective in mind.
- Noticing all the thoughts that come up during movement.
- Learning how to feel a sense of joy, confidence, and energy despite any challenges in our body and mind.



Yoga will not make seizures go away. But it will keep the body active and can play a big role in reducing stress, panic, sadness, anger, and feelings of “why me?”

In this section, you will find some easy and gentle yoga postures and breathing techniques that help improve oxygen flow to the brain where seizures start. Try these at home every day or as often as you can, following the step-by-step guide on [page TK](#).

Getting started with yoga

To do yoga, you don't have to go anywhere or do anything special. You just have to decide you want to do it. When you do it every day, or a few days each week, you will feel different and feel a shift in your mind and spirit.

If it makes you feel more secure, ask someone you trust who knows seizure first aid to be near you when you're doing yoga. Invite them to join you in doing the movements and breathing! Is there someone in your community who does yoga? Ask for their support. Let them know you have epilepsy and seizures.

If you experience an “aura” or a feeling that a seizure is about to happen while you're practicing yoga, sit down and stop moving. Connect with your breath.

Make sure the space where you are doing yoga is clear of sharp or dangerous objects that might hurt you or cause injury if you have a seizure. Yoga poses involve standing, sitting, and lying down. Cushion hard surfaces with a mat or blanket to make yourself comfortable. Practice these poses slowly.



Yoga is for everyone, not just people with epilepsy.

Child's pose (Balasana)

1. Sit with buttocks resting on or slightly above heels, keeping knees slightly apart.
2. Lean forward keeping buttocks in place. Let your belly drop between your knees.
3. Rest your forehead on the floor as best as you can. Stretch arms forward with your palms facing down. Relax your shoulders.
4. Stay in this pose and breathe in and out for 7 to 8 breaths.

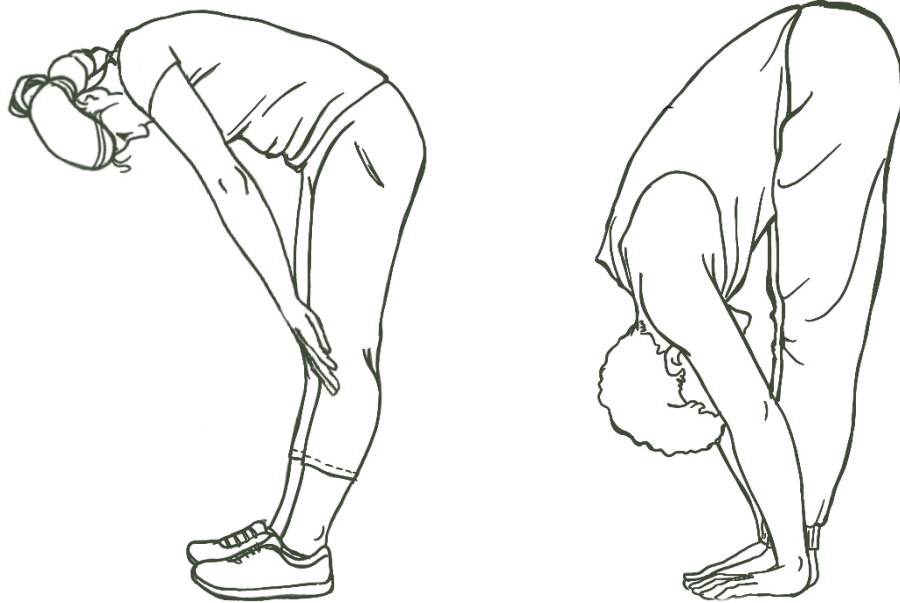
**Benefits of child's pose:**

- Releases stress
- Improves blood and oxygen flow to the brain
- Stretches back, thighs, hips, arms, and shoulders
- For a person recovering from a seizure, this pose helps aching muscles and relaxes tired bones

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Forward fold (Uttanasana)

1. Stand up straight with your feet apart at shoulder distance.
2. Breathe in. Release breath and bend forward from the hips. As you bend, your belly and chest will move closer to the thighs.
3. Feel free to bend your knees a little as your torso moves down. Place your hands on the ground or on your shins, as far as you are able to reach.
4. Stay in this pose and breathe in and out for 7 or 8 breaths.
5. Breathe in as you roll up slowly and gently. Feel the stretch in your back, hips, and legs.

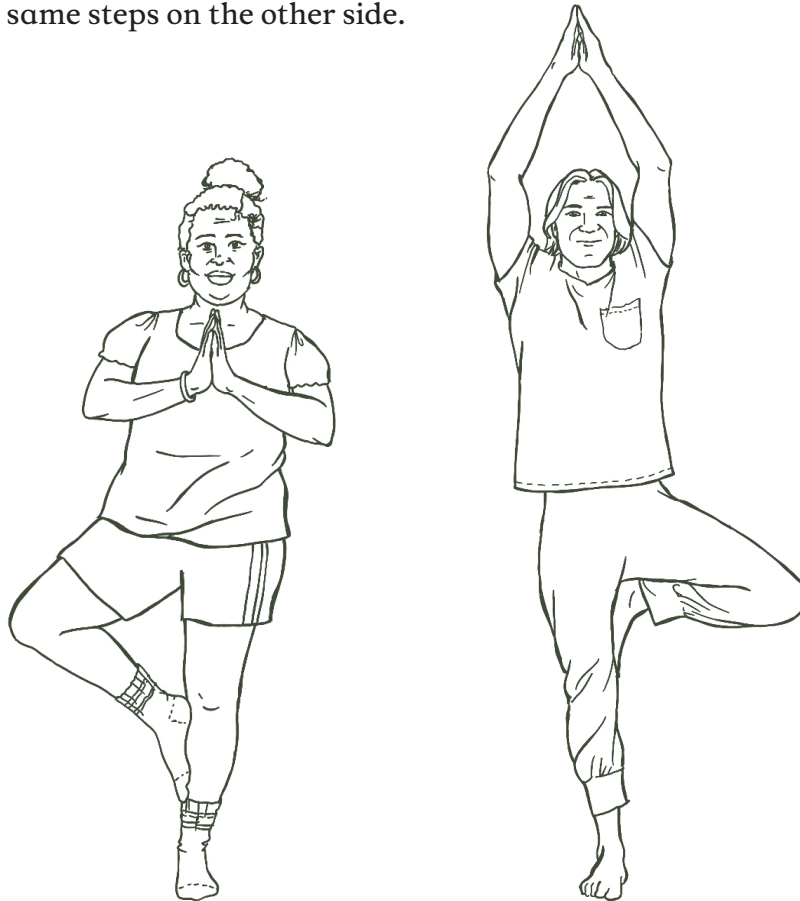


Benefits of forward fold pose:

- Stretches and lengthens the spinal cord that connects to the brain
- Releases stress, feelings of panic, and tiredness
- Soothes anger and other irritating emotions

Tree pose (Vrikshasana)

1. Stand up straight with feet apart at shoulder distance. Rest your arms at your sides.
2. Shift your body weight onto one foot.
3. Slowly lift the other foot off the ground. Focus on balance and stability—use a wall or the back of a chair for balance, if necessary. Bend the raised knee and bring the bottom of the raised foot to rest against your inner thigh. If this is challenging, bring your foot to the lower part of the leg. Avoid resting it on the area around the knee. Do not be hard on yourself if you lose balance or are shaky. Just start over and try again.
4. When comfortable, bring both hands together in front of the chest, folded as in prayer. You can also try raising your arms overhead with your palms facing each other.
5. Keeping your gaze fixed on a point on the floor or a wall in front of you will help you keep your balance.
6. Stay in this pose for 7 or 8 breaths.
7. Slowly lower your arms if they are raised, and lower the raised foot to the ground to come to a standing position.
8. Repeat the same steps on the other side.



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Benefits of tree pose:

- Improves balance and stability, which can help reduce the risk of falls or injuries during seizures
- Releases stress
- Practicing and maintaining this pose can build confidence and self-esteem. Over time, as your balance improves, you will experience a sense of achievement and increased confidence.

Biban says yoga helps her epilepsy

My seizures started when I was 5 years old. When I was 10, I had a grand-mal seizure at school. I fainted. When I woke up, I had passed urine in my skirt.

My aunt, who is a nurse, took me to a hospital where they told me that I have epilepsy and have to take medicine every day. But even with the medicines, I can still have a seizure.

I love to run, dance, and go for long walks and didn't want to stop any of that. When I was 15, my aunt suggested I add yoga to my activities.

Yoga helps me deal with my epilepsy in a positive way. Before a seizure, I can feel my brain getting excited, but doing yoga helps me stay calm and relaxed.

Sometimes having epilepsy makes me feel sad and tired, but when I do yoga, I feel proud of myself. It's like charging my body's battery. It always makes me feel better.



My experience is that yoga goes really well with treatment for epilepsy!