



Gomukhasana (Cow Face Pose)

Description

Gomukhasana

gom = cow

mukha = face

Cow Face Pose

Gomukha means one whose face resembles a cow. It also means a kind of a musical instrument narrow at one end and broad at the other like the face of a cow. B.K.S. Iyengar

Gomukha is the name of the source of the river Ganges, a sacred place of pilgrimage. (Joseph LePage)

Heart of Pose

Hip & Shoulder Stretch

Note

This pose is good preparation for other poses. Top arm prepares for Handstand, Forearm Balance and Headstand. Bottom arm prepares for twists and Shoulderstand. (Rodney Yee)

See Also

- [Asana Categories](#)
- [General Alignment Principles](#)
- [Alignment Cueing](#)



Effects / Benefits

Musculoskeletal

Musculoskeletal effects may include the following.

- Stretches hips & legs
- Stretches glutes & deep hip rotators (including piriformis)
- Stretches shoulder joints
- Expands chest
- Latissimus dorsi are fully extended (BKS Iyengar)
- Forward fold variation releases lower spine

Energy, Mood, Emotion

Effects to energy, mood or emotion may include the following.

- Centering

Inner Body

Inner body effects may include the following.

- Massages & purifies the lymph nodes of the groin & underarms, providing immune support (Joseph LePage)

Therapeutic Uses*

- Bursitis (prevention)
- Leg Cramps (BKS Iyengar)
- [Rotator Cuff Injury](#) (prevention and recovery)
- [Sciatica](#) (Bernie Clark notes that the pose can aggravate sciatica; to avoid this, he advises elevating hips so knees are below hips; do not allow hips to rotate backward)

* This pose is often associated with positive effects related to the conditions listed. But unless trained in yoga therapy, teachers are usually advised against prescribing particular *asanas* to address specific conditions.

Cautions

When choosing a variation or alternative, consider the following:

1. The heart / purpose of the pose.
2. The role it is playing in the sequence.
3. Why the pose is not accessible or appropriate for this student at this time.



Use modifications for:

- [Knee issues](#)
- [Hip issues](#)
- [Shoulder issues](#)
- Elbow issues
- [Wrist issues](#)
- [Low back pain](#)

Sciatica



Bernie Clark notes this pose can aggravate [sciatica](#) while other sources cite it can help.

Variations Summary

Beginner



- *Gomukhasana* legs, hands to feet, fold forward
- *Gomukhasana* arms from any seat or standing pose
- If bottom knee strains, straighten it
- If top knee strains, prop it with bolster or blanket
- Hold strap
- Sit on a block or bolster
- Prop hips with blanket
- Lie on back

More



- Bring heels close together; sit on heels; drop chin to chest; option to place blanket on heels or one on heels & one under them
- Or, sit on heel of bottom leg; let foot of top leg move to side
- Forward Fold: *Gomukhasana* Arms, bottom leg extended straight, fold forward
- *Gomukhasana* Legs, Eagle Arms, fold forward, elbows to block (Bernie Clark)
- Side Bend: *Gomukhasana* Legs, forearm to floor on side of lower leg, other arm to top knee, lateral bend

Variation Photos

Variation for Knee Issues

Prop Top Knee



If top knee is strained, prop with blanket or bolster.

Side Bend Variation

Gaze Down



Take forearm to floor on side of lower leg. Take other arm to top knee or alongside ear as shown.

More Variations & Adaptations

See [Variations](#) for many more considerations.

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