



Marichyasana III (Marichi's Pose Twist)

Description

Marichyasana III Intermediate

A person sitting on a ledgeDescription automatically generated with low confidence

Marichyasana III



Marichyasana

mar-ee-chee-AWS-ahnuh

Marici = name of a sage in Indian mythology (or name of a demon who begins to awaken)

Heart of Pose

- Twist
- Also requires a hamstring stretch, core strength, and openness in shoulders

VARIOUS ASPECTS OF POSE MAY BE EASIER OR HARDER FOR EACH STUDENT

Each of these aspects of the pose asks something specific from the body anatomically, whether it's length in the hamstrings or a certain amount of openness in the shoulders for binding. One or more of these aspects may come easier or more slowly to you. â?? David Keil

Naming



- Marichyasana I = Marichyasana A
- Marichyasana II = Marichyasana B
- Marichyasana III = Marichyasana C
- Marichyasana IV = Marichyasana D

Notes

- Marichyasana poses are presented inconsistently among different sources; here they are shown as they are typically presented in Ashtanga and Iyengar sources.
- Marichyasana III is a basic sitting twist. It will get you ready for its more challenging cousins (Marichyasana I, II and IV) as well as help relieve your back after a vigorous *asana*.
- Richard Rosen
- For very in-depth considerations on Marichi II, see Roger Cole's article [here](#).
- See Also: [Marichi Forward Bends](#)

Effects / Benefits

Energy, Mood, Emotion

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

- Stimulating.

MOVING TO THE UNKNOWN (SUBCONSCIOUS)

As the spine rises upward, it signifies the rise in consciousness. Spiraling from front to back, we look into the seat of the back body, which is equated to the [subconscious mind](#). Thus, we fearlessly move from the known to the unknown. Rama Jyoti Vernon

Inner Body

Inner body effects may include the following.

- Tones, massages, squeezes, cleanses abdominal organs, including liver, spleen, intestines and kidneys.
- Holding the posture strengthens the diaphragm. (Mukunda Stiles)

Musculoskeletal

Musculoskeletal effects may include the following.

- Stretches spine.
- Strengthens deep muscles of back.
- Increases blood circulation in back.



- Tones abdominals.
- Stretches obliques.
- Stretches shoulders.
- Strengthens erector spinae.
- Brings increased blood flow to discs and deep muscles of the back.
- Strengthens diaphragm.
- Muscular strengthening in back is said to stabilize the vertebrae.

TWIST WITH HIP AND HAMSTRING STRETCHING

[In comparison to a [Seated Twist](#),] the leg position [of Marichi III] provides the additional benefits of stretching your outer hip muscles on the bent knee side and your hamstrings and inner thigh muscles on the straight leg side. â?? Baxter Bell MD

INSPIRATION

I inevitably find myself drawn as if by a magnet to the deep and soul-drenching twist of Marichyasana III. One of the most exquisite and refreshing of all yoga postures, Marichyasana III serves as a balm for tight shoulders, achy backs, sluggish digestion, and stifled breathing. It leaves us balanced, rejuvenated, and ready for the day ahead. â?? Claudia Cummins

Therapeutic Uses*

- [Asthma](#)
- [Back Ache](#)
- [Digestive problems](#)
- [Fatigue](#)
- [Sciatica](#)

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

Contraindications & Cautions

Contraindications

Marichyasana twists are generally not recommended for students with these conditions:

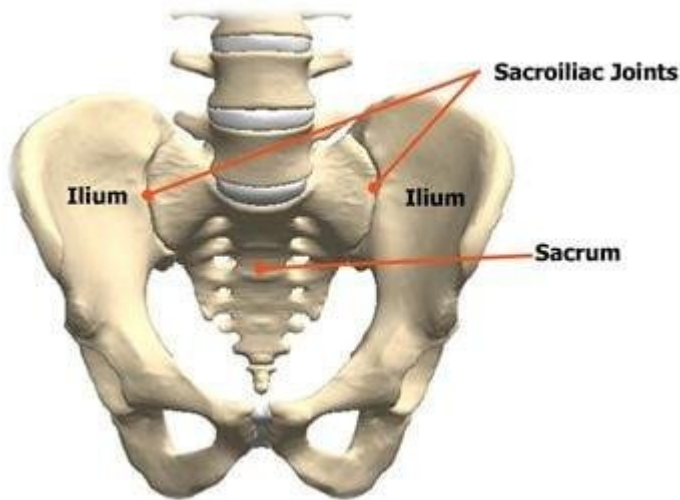
- [Back or spine injury](#)
- [Diarrhea](#)
- [High blood pressure](#)
- [Insomnia](#)
- [Low blood pressure](#)
- [Migraine or headache](#)

- Osteoporosis (Baxter Bell MD)
- [Pregnancy](#)
- [Sacroiliac \(SI\) joint issues](#) â?? Some sources advise against twists for SI issues; others advise varying the pose as noted [here](#).

CONTRAINDICATIONS

Due to the asymmetry of the legs, this twist can be problematic for those with lower back pain and dysfunction as it can aggravate their symptoms. Those with wrist pain may need to modify the position of the back hand, as this twist brings more potential pressure into that area. And because this twist constricts the abdomen, women in the 2nd and 3rd trimester of pregnancy should do other more open twists (see version 4 of Easy Sitting Twist), as well as those with diagnosed osteoporosis. â?? Baxter Bell MD

SI Joint Issues



- Many advise against twists for sacro-iliac (SI) joint issues.
- Others suggest varying seated twists by moving twisting side buttock forward a couple of inches.
- Students should not feel poses in the dimples above the buttocks (the [sacroiliac joints](#)).
- See more: [SI Joint Issues](#) and [Category: Twists](#).

Compressed Spine

A person doing yogaDescription automatically generated with medium confidence

Watch for leaning into back hand or twisting at expense of lengthening, as shown here.

Teaching Considerations

- Twisting without first lengthening spine can cause compression and misalignment.

- In addition, twisting without a long spine is usually accomplished via the strength of the arms while the opportunity to target spinal muscles is missed.
- Sit up on bolster or blankets.
- Tent fingers of back hand or place hand on block.
- Come out of twist; inhale, lengthen and then begin again to gently twist with exhale, maintaining length.
- See also: [Asana Category: Twists](#).

Take Care

These safety precautions come from Richard Rosen, Yoga Journal, [Marichyasana III](#).

- The Maricyasana Twist “helps relieve lower back stiffness, but only if done properly” otherwise it will increase stiffness. •
- “Before you begin to twist, it’s essential that your pelvis be in a neutral position so that your spine can fully lengthen. To do this, imagine your whole pelvis as a bowl filled with water: If the bowl of the pelvis tips too far forward or back, the water will spill. •
- Initiate twist from base of spine.
- Sit on props “until you’re positive that you’re resting directly on top of your sitting bones, with your tailbone and pubis equidistant from the floor, indicating that your pelvis is neutral. •
- For students new to pose don’t press arm against outside of bent knee. • Most of us lack the flexibility to do this and still keep the spine long. Bringing your arm to the outside of your knee forces you to hunch over your bent leg, which immediately shortens the spine and not only obstructs the twist but can, over time, strain the lower back. Instead, wrap your left arm around your leg, hug it into your torso, and press your right hand into the floor just behind you, pushing your torso up and forward. • (See Variations in menu above for photo)

Basic Form

Set Up



1. Begin in [Dandasana](#). Prop sit bones as needed to ensure natural spinal curves.
2. Inhale, bend right leg and bring heel close to buttock.
3. Allow some space between right foot and extended leg; line up right foot with outer edge of right hip.
4. Sit tall and press sit bones down.
5. Keep extended leg active.

Moving into Pose



A person sitting on the floorDescription automatically generated with medium confidence

More Accessible Variation

Exhale

1. Wrap arm around opposite knee; other hand goes to floor behind buttocks.
2. Keep extended leg active; kneecap facing up.
3. Next, take back of upper arm to outside of knee
4. Sit tall, breathe smoothly.

A person sitting on the floorDescription automatically generated with low confidence

Inhale

- Lift lower back up and elongate spine.

Exhale

- Press arm into leg and rotate belly, then chest, then head.
- Continue to move into the pose with the breath: Inhale lift lower back up and elongate spine.
Exhale- press arm into leg and rotate rib cage.

Full Pose

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Exhale

1. Twist right, turning chest 90° to clear chest past thigh.
2. Bring left arm across and wrap around right knee so that tricep is pushing against outside of leg.
3. Take right arm behind back and clasp hands, wrists or strap.

Inhale

1. Lengthen spine.
2. Gaze over right shoulder.

To Come Out

1. Inhale Unwrap and gaze forward.
2. Exhale Release and straighten legs.

To see more on practicing the full pose, see the video in [Verbal Cues](#). See also: Ashtanga Yoga, p. 94 and Power Yoga p. 159.

To Emphasize

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1. Ground through sit bones.
2. Activate and extend lengthened leg.
3. Draw shoulder blades down.
4. Broaden through chest.
5. Keep spine lengthened.
6. Keep breath steady.

Verbal Cues

Legs

1. Draw heel of bent leg as close to sit bones as possible.
2. Stabilize foot so knee is fixed.
3. Keep extended leg active.

Torso + Arm/Knee Connection



Arm/Knee Connection

1. Fix arm outside of knee.
2. Press outside of knee against arm.
3. Press back & down against knee with back of arm.

Torso

LIFT FIRST BEFORE TWISTING

Encourage your chest to lift first before twisting! The rotation force comes from the shoulders both pulling backward, thus widening the chest. — Mukunda Stiles



1. Lift chest.
2. Keep lifting lower back.
3. Draw shoulder blades down & away.

Twisting Action

CREATING PRESSURE IN THE ABDOMEN

Bear in mind that the one of the primary goals for this pose is to create pressure in the abdomen, and deep, diaphragmatic breathing is the most effective tool you have to increase the intensity and effectiveness of any forward bending or twisting pose. With every inhale, imagine the spine lengthening as the pressure within your torso increases; with your exhale, you might be able to twist a little more deeply as that pressure drops. â?? Bliss Yoga

1. Initiate twist from base of spine.
2. Exhale to deepen into twist.
3. Inhale & partially come out of twist, lengthen spine; can stay here for a few breaths to allow â??muscle spindles to acclimateâ?• before again deepening. (Ray Long)
4. Lengthen from groin of extended leg to opposite shoulder while turning lower abdomen toward bent leg. (Donald Moyer)
5. To use facilitated stretching to deepen (Ray Long): Once in twist, press back of arm into knee (to contract TFL, glute medius & lats). Hold, breathe, engage abs. Then release the ab contraction, press arm & leg to rotate deeper.
6. While above cue involves facilitated stretching (and therefore the ab contraction), if not teaching this, the typical instruction is to keep belly relaxed.
7. Once torso has twisted, relax shoulders and turn head.

More Teaching Cues

BREATHING

As you breathe steadily and comfortably, envision your spine within you; drop your awareness into your tailbone and then slowly, breath by breath, begin sweeping upward, paying attention to sensations in the sacrum, the waist, the upper back, the neck, and finally the skull. Enjoy this process of introspection, honing your sensitivity to the feelings passing through you deep inside.â?• â?? Claudia Cummins

1. When fingers are placed on floor or blankets behind you, press into fingers to maintain lift in spine.
2. Notice diaphragm is compressed and continue to breathe as smoothly, slowly, deeply & easily as possible.
3. Keep chin parallel to floor.

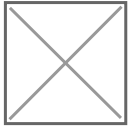
Videos

2-1/2 min, Narrated by Jason Crandell

A person sitting on a yoga mat

Description automatically generated with low confidence

5 min, Kino MacGregor Assists Student



Mythology

MARICHI THE SAGE

According to BKS Iyengar, Marichi was a sage in Indian mythology. He was the son of [Brahma, the Creator](#), and the grandfather of Surya the Sun. In the [Bhagavad Gita](#), he is one of the original seven great soul teachers (*maharishis*) and is identified as the chief of the forty-nine winds, the source of [prana](#). â?? Mukunda Stiles

METAMORPHOSIS OF CONSCIOUSNESS

In the story of the Ramayana, Marica was the son of Tataka the demonessâ?|. Marica showered thousands of arrows upon Rama (an incarnation of Visnu) but Ramaâ??s arrows covered all directions, dispelling the illusory power the demonâ?|. Rama then launched an arrow which hit Marica and carried him across the seasâ?|. Marica fell in a forest in the far off country of Lanka. Here, he built an ashram and meditated on Rama out of fear. It is said that the fear of God is the beginning of knowledge. This was the beginning of Maricaâ??s conversion. This twisting asana symbolizes Maricaâ??s conversion or the metamorphosis of consciousness. The spine elongates and makes an evolutionary spiral, awakening consciousness from the egoistic, contracted mind to the expanded macrocosmic mind, where all thoughts are directed toward the Divineâ?|. *Maricyasana*, like all poses, is a reminder not to destroy the ego but to transform it. â?? Rama Jyoti Vernon

INTUITIVE SEEING

Marichi literally means a ray of light (of the sun or moon). Marichi is the son of [Brahma](#) and chief of the Maruts (â??shining onesâ?•), the war-like storm gods. Heâ??s one of the seven (sometimes 10 or 12) seers (*rishis*) or lords of creation (*prajapatis*), who intuitively â??seeâ?• and declare the divine law of the universe ([dharma](#)). Marichi is the great-grandfather of Manu (â??man, thinking, intelligentâ?•), the Vedic Adam and the â??fatherâ?• of humanity. â?? Yoga Journal

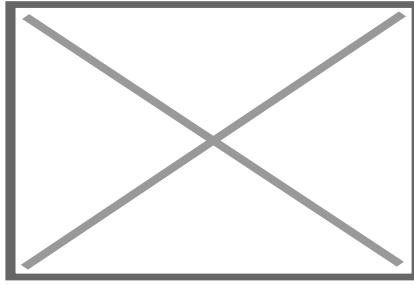
See Also

- Donâ??t miss the detailed teaching support in [Asana Category: Twisting Poses](#).

Variations



Marichyasana III Marichi Twist



See [Basic Form](#) for instructions

Hold Knee Common Variation

A person sitting on the floor Description automatically generated with medium confidence

This variation allows student to find enough space to learn actions of pose. Wrap knee rather than prop elbow. Variation Lie back hand and reach arm straight back from shoulder (as shown [here](#)).

Elbow Outside Knee Another Useful Variation

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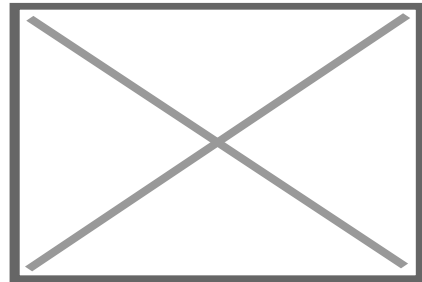
See [Basic Form](#) for instructions

Hand to Wall (Not Shown) Set Up Near Wall

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Set up near wall. Wrap one hand around knee. As you twist, press back hand against wall to assist in lifting torso up.

Another Twist VariationTake Foot Over Extended Leg



Twist WorkshopPreparation or Workshop

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Another variation is to take foot to outer side of knee of extended leg rather than inside of extended leg.

(Mukunda Stiles teaches this in [Structural Yoga Therapy](#).)

To help student find length & avoid collapsing, have her remove back hand from floor & instead stretch it up, requiring her to lengthen & lift to remain upright. (Brian Cooper, [Yoga: The Art of Adjusting](#) 2006 p 92)

Twist AlternativeHands to Wall

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Photo shows a general twist variation of alternative

Seated TwistAlternative

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Chair YogaAlternative

A person sitting on a chairDescription automatically generated with medium confidence

Standing Twist at WallAlternative

A person sitting on a chairDescription automatically generated with medium confidence

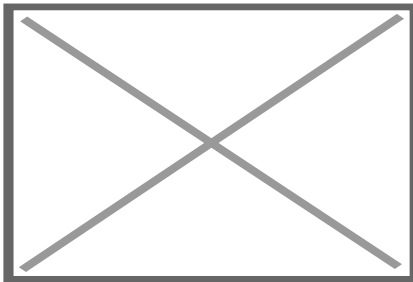
See also:
Asana

Categories
?? [Twists](#)

Reclined TwistAlternative



Watch Out ForSlumping



See
[Twisting](#)
for
teaching
cues to
prevent
slumping.

Hands On

For Collapsing

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From Brian Cooper Yoga: The Art of Adjusting 2006 p 92

For student who is collapsing in the pose, ask her to stretch back hand up to help find actions to lift upright (shown above).

1. In addition, you can set up behind student's back.



2. Hold her arm, asking her to resist.
3. Meanwhile, assist in drawing shoulder blades in.

See More

See [Adjusting Marichyasana C](#) by David Keil for in-depth considerations and multiple images. Twists can be challenging! Adjusting students in Marichyasana C can give them a better understanding of how to access a twist in their body. Once they understand the principles of accessing a twist, they can then apply those same principles to more complex twists as their practice continues to evolve. â?? David Keil

Author

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