



Marichiyasana C

Description

In this version of marichyasana, we turn the upper body away from the straight leg and toward the flexing knee. Similarly, the lower body, from the pelvis down through the legs, turns away from the upper body. The twisting trunk and vertebral column connect the shoulders and hips.

MARICHASANA C (16 MOVEMENTS)

7	SAPTA	Inhale, jump through Exhale, take posture twist to the right
8	ASTAU	Inhale, lift up
9	NAVA	Exhale, jump back, Chaturanga
10	DASA	Inhale, Upward-Facing Dog
11	EKĀDASA	Exhale, Downward-Facing Dog
12	DUADASA	Inhale, jump through Exhale, take posture twist to the left
13	TRAYODASA	Inhale, lift up
14	CATURDASA	Exhale, jump back, Chaturanga
15	PANCADASA	Inhale, Upward-Facing Dog
16	SODASA	Exhale, Downward-Facing Dog

Anatomy

In this version of marichyasana, we turn the upper body away from the straight leg and toward the flexing knee. Similarly, the lower body, from the pelvis down through the legs, turns away from the upper body. The twisting trunk and vertebral column connect the shoulders and hips. Each region of the body forms a subplot that contributes to the main story of the pose. For example, look at how the upper and lower extremities connect where the upper arm wraps over the bent knee. This point forms a focus of leverage with different variations, depending on the way the arm and the leg are used. For



example, fix the knee in place and then press against it with the arm to turn the body. Then brace the arm and push against it with the side of the leg. Note the different effects of these two actions. Finally, press the arm and leg equally against each other. How is your experience of the pose different in each variation? Work your way into the shoulders. Note that the rotator cuff (the deep muscles of the shoulder) can subtly augment the twist. The more superficial muscles, such as the deltoids and latissimus dorsi, also have rotational components, depending on the angles of the fibers. Then look at the bent leg. There are muscles with rotational actions from the foot to the hip; any of these can be engaged to augment the twist to varying degrees. Each forms a chapter in the story of the pose. The breath provides the soundtrack.

BASIC JOINT POSITIONS

- The hips flex.
- The straight-leg knee extends.
- The held-leg knee flexes.
- The trunk rotates.
- The shoulders internally rotate and extend.
- The elbows extend and the forearms pronate.
- The held wrist extends.

Synergizing/Activating

- The posterior deltoids extend the shoulders back away from the body, stretching the anterior deltoids.
- The triceps work to extend the elbows away from the body.
- The lower trapezius, spanning the back, draws the shoulders away from the neck.
- The middle trapezius works with the rhomboid muscles, joining the shoulder blade and the spine to draw the shoulders back toward the midline, opening the chest.
- The pectoralis minor chest muscle lifts the lower rib cage.
- The oblique abdominals activate to increase the twist of the torso.
- The psoas and pectineus flex the bent leg at the hip.
- The gluteus medius and tensor fascia lata (deep in the buttocks of the bent leg and along the side of the hip) turn the thigh bone inward. Both of these muscles move the hip away from the center line, abducting it. This action presses the outer part of the knee against the arm, deepening the turn.
- The hamstrings on the outer side of the bent knee (biceps femoris) activate to rotate the hip.
- The quadriceps of the extended leg straighten the knee, and the tibialis anterior muscle (along the outside of the shin) bends the foot toward the shin.
- The peroneus longus and brevis evert the ankle and turn the foot slightly outward, opening the sole.

Preparation

Reach around the knee and bend the elbow to draw the torso toward the thigh. Squeeze the knee into the chest. Then push the side of the leg into the hand and feel how this aids to turn the body. Press the



other hand into the floor a few inches behind the sacrum, and straighten the elbow to lift the chest. Then attempt to scrub forward with the hand to augment the twist. As you become more flexible, place the outer elbow against the knee. Then fix the knee and thigh in place as a stationary object and press the elbow against the side of the leg to turn the body. Vary this by fixing the elbow as a stationary object and pressing the knee into the back of the elbow. Finally, press the knee and the elbow equally into each other. Observe the different effects of these actions. Next, rotate the forward arm internally and reach the hand around the knee. Similarly, roll the back shoulder inward and reach the arm behind the back. Link the hands with a belt and pull with the hand that is wrapped around the knee to draw the upper body deeper into the twist. Eventually connect the hands, first by interlocking the fingers and then by grasping the wrist, as illustrated here. Extend the wrist of the back arm to lock the grip. Don't forget the storyline of the straight leg. As you twist further from the upper body, the straight leg will tend to rotate internally. Balance this by engaging the buttocks to press the back of the leg into the floor, and then externally rotate the thigh to bring the kneecap to face straight upwards.

STEP 1 Flex the hip by activating the psoas and its synergists. Note the rhythmic action of the femur flexing and the pelvis tilting forward simultaneously. Contract the hamstrings to flex the knee. Remember that the knee has some capacity to rotate and thus contributes to the twist. Engage the outer hamstrings—the biceps femoris—to create this movement. The cue for this is to plant the ball of the foot into the mat and gently attempt to turn the foot in external rotation (as illustrated). With the knee bent, the thigh and lower leg move as a unit. This means that external rotation of the tibia internally rotates the hip. This action contributes to turning the lower body away from the upper body, deepening the twist.

STEP 2 Press the outside of the knee into the arm to engage the tensor fascia lata, gluteus medius, and gluteus minimus. These muscles also have fibers that internally rotate the hip; they turn the lower body away from the upper body to deepen the twist.

STEP 3 There is a tendency for the ribs to bulge backward as you deepen the twist. Counter this by adding the erector spinae and quadratus lumborum to the muscle actions described in Steps 1 and 2. Engaging these muscles draws the ribcage towards the bent knee, aiding in turning the body and expanding the chest forward.

STEP 4 Activate the quadriceps to extend the straight-leg knee. The upper body will tend to draw this leg into some degree of internal rotation. We want to rotate it away from the upper body, but only to the point where the kneecap faces up (not more to one side or the other). Balance internal and external rotation of the thigh. Engage the gluteus maximus by pressing the entire back of the leg into the floor. Tuck the tailbone under to activate the deep external rotators. These actions will turn the leg slightly outward and bring the kneecap to face straight up. Offset this by engaging the tensor fascia lata and gluteus medius to stabilize the thigh.

STEP 5 Wrap the arm over the knee by internally rotating the shoulder. Engage the pectoralis major to initiate this action. You can feel this muscle contract by placing one hand on the chest and the other hand behind the back, lifting the hand off the lower back. The anterior deltoid, teres major, and subscapularis muscles. The back shoulder also internally rotates in this pose. Begin to straighten the elbows and draw them away from the back by contracting the triceps and posterior deltoids, respectively. Activate the triceps of the arm that is wrapped around the knee more strongly than the other arm to draw the trunk deeper into the twist.



STEP 6 Engage the rhomboids to draw the back-arm shoulder blade towards the spine. Activate the serratus anterior to abduct the front-arm shoulder blade away from the midline (as if pushing an object away from you). These two actions synergize to turn the thorax (the chest) from the shoulders.

STEP 7 Rotate the forward shoulder toward the knee. This engages the forward-side internal oblique abdominals and the back-side external oblique abdominals. You can isolate these muscles by flexing the trunk forward toward the opposite knee. Turning the thorax contorts the ribcage and contracting the abdominal muscles compresses the abdominal contents upwards toward the diaphragm. These combined compressions tend to make breathing shallow. You can counteract this to some degree using the accessory muscles of breathing, especially the pectoralis minor and serratus anterior, to actively expand the ribcage.

SUMMARY This twisting pose stretches the oblique abdominals and transversus abdominis, as well as the deep muscles surrounding the spine, and the spinal rotators. The external rotators of the shoulders, the infraspinatus and teres minor, and elements of the posterior deltoids also stretch.

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