

Yoga for Strength

A lot of people think that yoga is about relaxing and being more flexible. While that's true, it also helps make your body strong. It strengthens and relaxes your mind too, and makes it more flexible. If you want to build strength in your body AND mind, but can't get to the gym, try these poses instead. As you do them, keep breathing, slowly and deeply.

We suggest holding each pose for five breaths, but you might want to start with three. With practice you could build up to ten or more. Listen to your body and work with it, not against it.

1. Child



Some of these poses are very strong, so you may need to take breaks. Rest like this whenever you need to. Try staying here for 5 breaths and then continuing the sequence.

2. Down Dog

5 breaths



Then flow slowly between these two poses in time with the breath: move into down dog as you breathe out and come into the plank as you breathe in. Start with three repetitions.

You can build up to five or even ten.

3. Plank

5 breaths



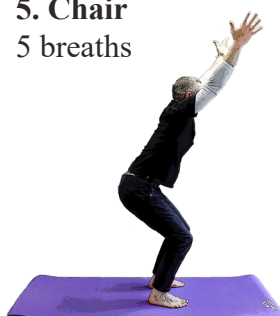
4. Side Plank

5 breaths each side



5. Chair

5 breaths



6. Warrior 1

5 breaths each side



7. Warrior 2

5 breaths each side



8. Tree

5 breaths each side



9. Locust

5 breaths



10. Sitting



Sit like this, or on a chair or the edge of your bed, comfortable and upright. Focus on your breathing. Count your out-breaths up to ten and then start again at one. If your attention wanders, don't worry, this is completely normal. Just return to counting your breaths. Do this for 5 minutes, or longer if you like. Try it every day, building up to 25 minutes over a week.

While these postures may seem to just be building strength in your body, they are all also helping you build inner strength. This last one in particular builds strength in your mind. Yes, it leads to more discipline and concentration, but real strength comes when you let go of thoughts about yourself and your situation - no matter how troubling - and merge with the breathing, one breath at a time.

This practice can also lead to a sense of peace.

