

CORE*Walking*

Psoas Release Exercises

CONSTRUCTIVE REST POSITION (CRP)



This is the main psoas release that we work with. It is a gravitational release of the psoas that allows the force of gravity to have its way with the contents of the trunk and the deep core.

- Lie on your back with your knees bent and your heels situated 12 to 16 inches away from your pelvis, in line with your sit bones.
- You can tie a belt around the middle of the thighs. This is a good thing to do, especially if you are weak in the inner thighs. You want to be able to really let go here and not have to think too much about the position of your legs.
- Then do nothing. You want to allow the body to let whatever happens to it come and go. Discomfort arises from conditioned muscular patterns. Try to allow the body to release rather than shift or move when unpleasant sensations arise.
- You are hoping to feel sensation that is something you can sit with and allow it to pass.
- Try to do this for 15 minutes a day, twice a day—in the morning and at night. If you have time, longer sessions are advisable.

But we are not here to suffer. If sensations come up and you feel that you just have to move, feel free to move, then come back to where you were and try again. It's possible that you'll do this exercise and not feel anything; that is fine also.

DIFFERENTIATING LEG FROM TRUNK



- Bend the left knee and interlace your fingers at the top of the shin. Hold the leg out at arm's length. Extend the other leg. Pay attention to the hip socket—only move your leg, not the pelvis.
- Bring tone to the pelvic floor and the low belly and do your best to stabilize the trunk.
- Extend the right leg out slowly. It doesn't have to extend completely.
- Slowly lift the right knee up, drawing the heel toward the hip and keeping the left heel on the floor with the foot flexed.
- Maintaining a stable trunk, extend the right leg out again.
- Repeat ten times on each side if possible. Feel free to start with as few as three times.

TIGHT-HIP RELEASE



This is meant as a passive release for extremely tight hips. If your knee is higher than a 45-degree angle from the floor when you assume this position, this exercise is for you.

- Lie on your back with the legs straight out on the floor. Stabilize the trunk and bring the right foot as high up on the left thigh as possible.
- Allow the right knee to release toward the floor, keeping the trunk stable the entire time.
- Try to let the release come from both the inner and outer thigh as gravity takes the leg toward the floor.
- Stay for five minutes on each side if possible.

SUB OCCIPITALS



The sub occipital muscles connect the base of the skull to the top of the spine and are the only muscles in the body with an energetic connection to the eyes. They tend to be chronically short.

- Lie flat on your back and bring a small natural arch to your lower back. The legs should be straight; you can put a blanket under the knees if there is any strain on the lower back.
- Raise your arms to the sky, pulling your shoulder blades away from the floor. Try to let the upper spine settle onto the ground. Grasp each shoulder with the opposite hand.
- Lengthen the back of the neck as much as you can without closing off or creating discomfort at the front of the throat.
- Stay for three minutes to start, and try to build up to five minutes.

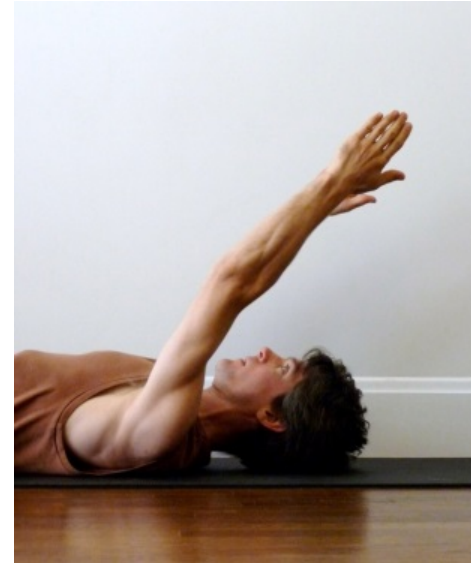
CACTUS ON THE BACK



This falls somewhere between a release and a stretch and is not nearly as benign as some of these explorations. In fact, this can be very intense, though you won't be doing much.

- Lie flat on your back. If it is not comfortable to lie with the legs straight, roll up a blanket and place it under the knees. This will release the hamstrings and reduce the strain on the lower back.
- Bring your arms out to the side and bend your elbows to form a right angle with the arms.
- Lengthen the back of the neck and allow the spine to soften toward the floor. The lower back and neck should each have a gentle arch, but ideally the rest of the spine should have contact with the floor. Move very slowly.
- Once you get your spine into a good place, bring your awareness to the forearms, wrists and hands. Try to open the hands, extending the wrists and the fingers. Move very slowly.
- Once you get the arm to a good place return to the spine. Go back and forth between the two and allow the back of the body to lengthen, soften, and release.

RELEASING ARMS



This exercise works on the ability to articulate the arms separately from the trunk.

- Lie flat on your back and bring your arms up, with the fingers pointing toward the ceiling.
- Begin to lower the arms over head, trying to keep the rib cage and spine from moving.
- Only go as far as you can go without the trunk moving. Be willing to start slowly and increase the range of motion over time.
- The eyes and head can follow the arms in movement.

BLOCK LUNGES



This is a release of both the quadriceps and the psoas. Sometimes the quadriceps muscles are so tight, there is no getting to the psoas until we release the quads a bit. You'll need three blocks for this.

- Positioned on your hands and knees or in Downward Facing Dog, step the right foot forward in between your hands. Two blocks will be for your hands by the front foot.
- Place the third block underneath the quadriceps muscle just above the knee, at the base of the thigh.
- Tuck the back toes and let the weight of the body fall onto the block. Do your best to keep the heel of the back foot pointing straight up toward the ceiling.
- The front leg and hip should not be under any strain. Feel free to make adjustments, turning the foot out or stepping the foot wider.

You need to stay for 90 seconds to get the full benefits of this pose.

RELEASING HANDS AND KNEES



This exercise explores the ability of the leg to separate from the pelvis and the spine.

- Start on your hands and knees with the hips over the knees and the wrists underneath the shoulders.
- Bring gentle tone to the pelvic floor and the lower belly and try to extend your right leg back, bringing the leg level with the trunk.
- Keep your awareness on the lower back and the pelvis stabilizing the trunk to release the leg.

As always, these are experiential exercises where you try to get a feeling for what the body is doing. The tighter psoas will be the side that can't move without pulling the pelvis and the spine with it.

TONING THE PSOAS



The following exercise works the psoas more than most of these explorations. Proceed slowly, and don't overdo it in the beginning.

- Begin in constructive rest. Extend the right leg straight out.
- Press the left foot down into the floor to help the right leg lift up two inches.
- Lift the right leg three or four inches higher, and then lower it back to two inches off the floor.
- Repeat five times if possible, keeping the pelvis and spine stable. The only thing working is the leg.
- Switch sides.

Once you are comfortable taking the leg up and down, begin again by pressing the opposite foot into the floor. One variation is to move the leg from side to side, and another is to move the leg on a diagonal, staying within a three- or four-inch range of motion.

Note: Three inches is a very short distance.

FOOT ON A BLOCK



This is a gravitational release of the psoas. This exercise is not limited to your house. If you have hip or groin pain when walking, feel free to stop at every corner and dangle one foot off of the curb while holding on to a lamp post.

- Place a block eight to ten inches from a wall.
- Step the left foot up on the block, allowing the right foot to hang down between the block and the wall. Place your right arm on the wall to help you stabilize the upper body.
- Keep the hips level and rotate the inner thighs back and apart—stick out your butt a bit, and feel like you can let the leg go from the base of the rib cage, the top of the psoas.
- Once you are comfortable with the leg hanging out of the hip, you can move the leg half an inch forward and back as slowly and steadily as possible. Half an inch is a very short distance.
- Let the leg dangle this way for 30 seconds or until the standing hip has done enough.
- Switch sides and tune in to which side is tighter. Do the second side for the same length of time that you did on the first side.
- Repeat for a second time on the tighter side.

TENNIS BALL UNDER FOOT



This is not technically a psoas release, but it is a gift to the body any way you look at it. This is great before or after constructive rest as well as anytime during the day. I recommend keeping a tennis ball in a shoe box under your desk; that will keep the ball from squirting away while you roll.

- Place a tennis ball under your right foot.
- Spend a minute or two rolling the ball under the foot. You can be gentle, or you can apply more pressure. The choice is yours.

Step off of the tennis ball and bend over your legs. You can check in with your body and see if you feel that the right leg seems a bit longer and looser. Feel free to scan the whole body in this fashion. There is a thick pad of connective tissue on the sole of the foot called the plantar fascia. By releasing the fascia on the underside of the right foot, you effectively release the entire right side of the body.

ORANGE THING



This is more for fun than anything else. Look at yourself in a mirror before and after you have done one side and see if notice a difference.

- Lay flat on your back with an orange or a ball of similar size sitting by your right hip.
- Roll the orange slowly back and forth from the heel of your palm to the fingertips.
- Pick up the orange and hold it in your open palm with the elbow on the floor and the palm facing the ceiling.
- Balance the orange on your palm for two or three minutes before stopping.