

How to:



Setu Bandhasana
Bridge

On the floor with your feet below the hips and the feet and knees hip width distant. Tuck the shoulders underneath you and push your heart up and open a little bit. Lengthen your neck, feel your head solid on the floor. Pushing into the feet and squeezing your buttocks and belly, lift the hips up. If there is flexibility in the shoulders and no strain on the neck, you can tuck one shoulder blade in a little tighter, and then the other. This brings you up a little higher on the shoulders. Don't turn the head in this position. If you can interlace your fingers and lengthen the arms, you can usually come up a little higher again, and pressing the hands into the floor below gives you a little extra stability. Pull your hands toward the feet to move your trapezius muscles toward your kidneys. This moves the back of your arms up toward the front. Press down into the

feet and forward with the knees, pulling a little in also. Engage pada bandha – try to pull your arches in. The knees and ankles should be in the same line. As you tuck your tailbone, pull the top of your hips toward the abdomen, and with the forward pull through the knees, flatten and lengthen the top of your body. This pulls the pubic bone and sacrum toward each other. Pull the chest up and forward toward the chin, but keep the neck long. The chin may tuck because of the shape of the body, but there should be space in the front of the neck.

Adjustments/Variation:

Watch the feet and knees. You can adjust by applying gentle pressure the top and sides of the knees. Look for arms bending, and the back of the neck long, space in the front. Elbows and shoulders should be in the same line. Advanced adjustments might include straddling the hips and applying gentle lift to the mid back. Use a block between the knees to encourage strengthening in the upper leg, or under the low back for prenatal.

Advancements / Strong Version:

Because these postures are impressive, it's easy to get caught up in trying to go deeper. But this is a posture that can be worked forever, with the payoff of finding it easier to sit, stand and walk.

Strong version: Shoulders stay flat on the floor, lift the hips to a plank line from knees to chin, maintain a gentle squeeze for 6-8 seconds. Lower the hips to the floor without touching down, and lift them again. Slow count and stable movement up and down. Put the knees together with the feet a little wider apart for the second set, and feet together knees apart for the third. Works hamstrings, glutes, erector spinae

Prep / Follow up:

Pelvic tilts are good prep. Follow up with Wind Relieving or Strong Wind Relieving.

Benefits:

Stretches the chest, neck and spine. Alleviates stress and mild depression. Stimulates abdominal organs, lungs, thyroid. Rejuvenates tired legs, improves digestion. Soothes the urogenital region and opens the heart. Lung expansion makes it good for high blood pressure and sinusitis.

Contraindications: Neck injuries.

Chakras: All. (6th chakra especially, it calms the mind, and stimulates brain activity. Alleviates headache, backache, insomnia)

Spiritual Aspects: This has the potential to be a powerful healer. It should be approached with respect and effort, and curious exploration.

Affirmation: I open my heart / I experience abundance

Benefits to Classes: In a class with a lot of abdominal work, following up with Bridge will release some of the abdominal tension. It's a nice calming pose as you begin your wind down.