



Yoga For You

Ray Madigan and Shelley Choy

Uttanasana (Intense Stretch Pose) with head support

In this version of Uttanasana, the head is supported, which allows the brain to become quiet. This support also allows the back muscles to lengthen without strain. In standing forward extensions the head is lower than the heart, which helps to lower blood pressure and rest the heart and lungs. If you have low blood pressure, come out of the pose slowly to avoid dizziness.

1. Place a height on an even surface. You can use yoga blocks, a stack of books or something similar. Stand facing this height and take the feet hip width apart. Turn the big toes in so that the outer edges of the feet are parallel. The knees should face straight forward.
2. Place the hands on the hips. Lift the knees by gripping with the thigh muscles and stand evenly on both feet.
3. Inhale and then lift the spine and chest. Keeping the legs straight, bend from the hips and take your head to the support and hands to the floor. If it is a strain to take the hands to the floor, then use additional heights for the hands.
4. The crown of the head should be supported without strain. Do not be on the forehead. You might have to adjust the height accordingly to achieve the correct support.



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Ray Madigan, co-director of Manoa Yoga Center, demonstrates Uttanasana with his head supported.

5. Press the heels down to stretch the spine and, as you grip the thigh muscles, allow the back of the legs to receive a steady even stretch.
6. Lengthen the back of the legs from the heels to the buttock bones. Now, keeping the heels down, take the weight on the feet toward the toes and bring the buttock bones in line with the heels so that the back of the legs are perpendicular to the floor.
7. In Uttanasana one should feel a single stretch from the heels to the crown of the head.
8. Stay in the pose for a minute or two, observing the soft flow of breath through the nostrils. Completely relax the eyes and muscles of the face. Soften the belly.
9. To come out of the pose, press the heels and lift the kneecaps up, take the hands to the hips and come up with an inhalation.

Ray Madigan and **Shelley Choy** are certified Iyengar Yoga teachers and co-direct the Manoa Yoga Center at Manoa Marketplace. Visit www.manoayoga.com or call 382-3910. Manoa Yoga Center, the authors and the Star-Bulletin take no responsibility for any injury arising from the practice of these yoga postures. Readers should seek a doctor's approval before commencing this yoga practice.