

# Yoga for Runners: *The Balance That Keeps You Moving*

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If there every was a Yin and a Yang combination of exercise styles, Yoga and Running are it. With over 1000 strikes again the ground each mile and an intense sport specific training attitude, runners are more in need of the benefits of yoga than almost any athlete out there. From Plantar Fasciitis to Iliotibial (IT) Syndrome, a runner without an injury is as rare as a canary without a song. A recent hip injury caused me to put myself on a self induced running ban that was abruptly lifted by my therapist who admonished me and stated that rest is the worst thing I could do for my hip. I quickly turned to my inner Yogi and got serious with my yoga practice to balance the pounding I was glad to be enduring once again. Taking 15-20 minutes post run to stretch can be a great gift and a token of thanks to our battle worn bodies.

Here are my favorite poses that should be performed after the body is warm and held for several breath cycles.

**Hero Pose (quadriceps/ankles/feet):** Kneeling on shins with hips on heels and toes flexed underneath you. Place hands on ground behind you and lift hips into the air. Alternate with Child's Pose allowing chest to fold forward onto quadriceps and forehead to come to ground.

**Pigeon (glutes/piriformas):** *This is my personal favorite and essential for those with hip issues.*

Starting in an all fours position, swing 1 leg forward in a bend manner so it rests on the ground below you as you extend the opposite leg out behind you. Keeping the hip of the rear leg facing straight downward allow the body to fold forward.

**Downward facing dog (hamstrings/calves/lower back):** Begin in an all fours position, with hands and feet shoulder width apart. Extend legs so body inverts into a V position. Head should be between your arms and heels should push toward the ground. This pose can also be done standing with hands on a railing (Wall Dog).

**Cross-Legged Iliotibial stance** (not truly a yoga pose but a fabulous stretch): Begin standing upright in front of a bar or counter. Step right leg across the left and lean into left hip.

**Pyramid (hamstrings):** Begin in wide leg stance, rotate body to one side then fold body downward from the hips. Yoga blocks on either side of the leg will give support to lower back.

**Butterfly (groin/inner thigh):** In a seated position, bring soles of feet together allowing knees to fall out to sides. Yoga blocks can again be helpful under the knees to give support. You can also use your hands to press the legs open.

**Seated forward fold (back/hamstrings):** In a seated position with legs extended in front of you, place a towel around feet or grab your toes and fold forward. Gaze should be downward rather than forward.

Finally, sit in a quiet spot and breath. Not only has yoga been shown to increase oxygen capacity but can bring perspective and balance to you as you visualize your goals.

Namaste!

