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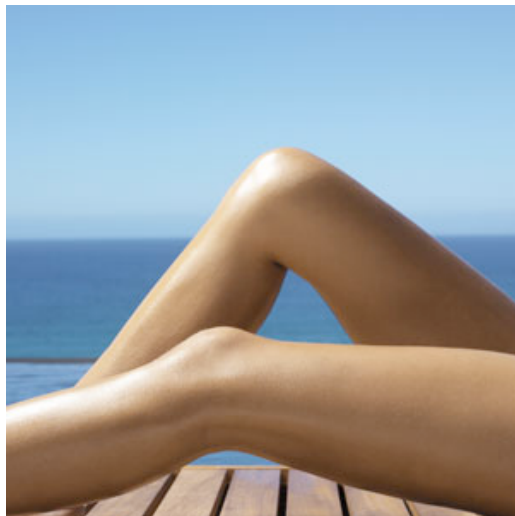
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## Say Goodbye to Knee Pain

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By Paige Greenfield

### Reduce inflammation and other woes with easy poses



One in four women experiences knee pain daily, and women are up to eight times more likely to suffer knee injuries than their male counterparts. The key to avoiding knee problems is keeping the whole body aligned.

"Yoga is beneficial for all your joints, but particularly your knees because the poses bring the entire body into balance," says Sandy Blaine, author of *Yoga for Healthy Knees* and codirector of the Alameda Yoga Station in Alameda, California. Many poses strengthen and stretch your inner and outer quadriceps as well as your hamstrings, calves, and ankles, which collectively keep your kneecaps stable and strong. Sustaining poses during your practice sends blood rushing through your muscles and ligaments, delivering nourishment and oxygen to those areas, which reduces inflammation, speeds healing, and repairs damage.

Blaine, no stranger to knee woes (she experienced chronic pain until she took up yoga more than 20 years ago), shares tips to keep knees happy and healthy.

#### Do the right kind of yoga

All yoga is not created equal, which is why we love it. But when it comes to knees, Blaine recommends a style that teaches correct alignment in every pose and increases your knowledge of how your joints are meant to move. In other words, take Iyengar or Anusara and avoid more strenuous styles like Ashtanga, Bikram, or Vinyasa. "Stick with a slower, more therapeutic practice," Blaine says. "Otherwise, you'll just move within the patterns already established in your body, which can worsen existing conditions."

#### Your hip is connected to your...

Wherever you feel pain, there's probably something going on somewhere

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else in your anatomy. Case in point: Your knee pain may be the result of tight hips. "If you have tight hips, those muscles don't allow for enough rotation to bend forward easily in a seated pose, so your knees will take over," Blaine says. As a result, the knees torque painfully in the joint. Blaine's advice? "Props help adapt poses to your needs so they're safest for you," she says. In any seated cross-legged pose, sit on a block or folded blanket so you still stretch the hips without straining your knees. Place washcloths in the creases behind your knees to create extra space in the joint.

#### **Know more about your feet than your shoe size**

Take off your shoes, stand up tall, and look down at your feet. What are your arches doing? Are they collapsing inward? Are they rolling outward toward your pinkie toes? Or do they seem evenly balanced with all four corners—big toes, little toes, and the sides of your feet—pressing into the floor? Chances are you roll inward or outward, Blaine says, which over time puts stress on the inside or outside of your knees. To correct this, practice walking around barefoot and resisting your foot's desire to roll in either direction. With every step try to get all four corners touching the floor evenly. Remember this feeling and continue working on it during your yoga practice in all standing postures.

#### **Stand on one leg and close your eyes**

This is one of the greatest tools for working on your alignment because it requires you to feel—not see—your body's placement, Blaine says. Instead, it relies on your feet, ankles, and knees to align correctly in order to keep you balanced. Working on balance poses like Tree and Warrior III strengthen the ligaments and tissues around your knee, which will keep your kneecap in place. (Watch the video to learn [Warrior III](#).)

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