

**POSE OF THE MONTH**  
**MAY 2007**

**Kurmasana** (Tortoise Posture) and **Supta Kurmasana** (Reclined Tortoise) *kurma* means tortoise and *supta* means reclined. Kurmasana is one of the core postures in Primary series, its benefits are many. The previous pose, Bhujapidasana requires strength and builds heat in the body—the strength of Bhujapidasana helps to counter the flexibility required for kurmasana while the heat from Bhujapidasana helps to open the body for kurmasana. Supta Kurmasana introduces the leg behind your head idea—so why do we want to do that?? Placing your leg behind your head invigorates the spine giving it a deep stretch allowing good blood flow around the vertebrae, it strengthens your abdominals, and increases blood supply to the heart and lungs. As well increasing humility and decreasing pride . . . This is a very important pose many people struggle with it so they avoid getting into it—don't repeat this mistake! These two poses are worth the effort.

**Method:**

**Kurmasana**

- ☪ From downward dog hop your feet outside past your hands lift up to Tittibhasana, slowly lower to the floor sliding your arms under your legs as you slide your heels forward—keeping your feet in line with your shoulders and thighs into the rib cage.



- ☪ Try to bring your head first to the floor, then your chin, then your chest.
- ☪ Press your legs down onto your shoulders and if possible allow your heels to lift off the floor. This action deepens the pose by pressing your shoulders down increasing the stretch through the back, and it also strengthens the quadriceps.



- ☪ Take five deep breaths whilst gazing toward the third eye.

**Supta Kurmasana**

- ☪ Exhaling slide your feet toward your hips a little as you bend your knees, work your shoulders a little further under your thighs,



turn your palms upward and bring your hands over your lower back, eventually clasping hands.

- ☪ Inhaling cross your ankles (right over left) try to tuck your head in underneath or behind your feet, forehead to the floor. Stay here for five breaths gazing toward the third eye.
- ☪ Inhaling release your hands and bring them forward, placing them under your shoulders, press your palms into the floor try to lift up to tittibhasana (the exit is the same as bhujapidasana), exhaling fold your legs back to bakasana, inhale lift your hips up higher trying to straighten your arms and exhale glide back to Chaturanga for vinyasa.



**Options!**

Kurmasana and Supta Kurmasana require flexibility and strength, most people practice Ashtanga yoga for over a year before they can even begin to attempt these poses safely. There are some preliminary poses that aid in the flexibility needed. However as with options to any pose—be careful not to get hung up on just practicing the option and not trying the full pose. You will be surprised, but one day your arms will just slip right under your thighs!

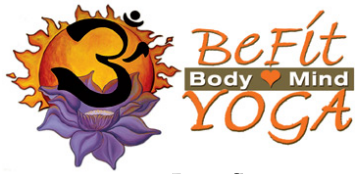


- ☪ Instead of sliding your arms out at shoulder level, you slide them under your calves and catch the outer edges of your feet, keeping your feet hip distance apart and knees and toes pointing upward. Pull on your feet to help flatten your back and pull yourself forward/deeper into the pose. This is your kurmasana, remain here for five breaths.

- ☪ For Supta Kurmasana you can attempt still to turn your palms and slide your arms

around and up and over your back as you wiggle your feet together and tuck your head in. If this position is uncomfortable on your back you can slide the bottoms of your feet together, clasp your hands around your toes and lay your head in your feet—or move in that direction. This is your Supta Kurmasana, take 5 breaths here.





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**Benefits:** These asana have a stimulating effect on the 'Kanda'. The Kanda is not a physical element although it does coincide with the nerve plexus above the perineal floor, the kanda is the surface from which all 72,000 nadis (channels of energy which closely relate to our nerves) originate.

Kurmasana expands the thorax and increases the capacity of our lungs and the amount of oxygenated blood to our heart and lungs, yogic texts tout this posture for anyone suffering from heart disease, chest pains, asthma and bronchitis. The spinal cord is strengthened by this pose along with the bones of the spine, the kidneys are also strengthened by this pose alleviating kidney pains. Kurmasana also helps to balance the Kapha dosha in our bodies and reduce excess fat.