

## UTKATANASANA



### Chair Pose Benefits:

This pose is considered easy: a simple standing pose, but depending where you have the arms can make a difference to how it feels for you. It can be hard on the knees for beginners or those with knee issues, but with practice working on the alignment will put less pressure on the knees and more into the thighs.

Below are some of the important advantages and benefits of chair pose.

- **Strengthening of the hips:** The position of the hips in this pose, is beautifully placed, taking the weight off the upper body and with practice the muscles around the hips gain strength giving the entire hip a strong look.
- **Deep stretch to the upper body:** The entire upper body, the shoulders, the chest, the spine, the neck, the middle and upper back get stretched in this pose, while the lower body gets strong.
- **Joints of the knees and the ankles get toned and strong:** While the upper body at the hips bend, the lower body takes some weight of the body in Utkatasana, giving the knee and the ankle joint the required pressure. This pressure slowly improves the joints and gives a toned look.
- **The entire leg gets the stretch making it strong:** While in the pose the bending of the knees adds a slight stress to the thighs at the quadricep muscles, and the hamstring muscles, including the calves, giving strength gradually to the entire leg.
- **Massages the abdominal muscles:** Utkatasana also helps the core muscles by tightening the abdominal muscles while holding the pose. Pulling in the tummy in while trying to bring the navel close to the spine, tightens the abdominal muscles bringing strength. This acts as a great massage to the organs too.
- **Opens the chest for better breathing:** The expansion of the shoulders brings an expansion of the chest, and helps the diaphragm to expand improving the breathing. A conscious effort is needed to understand the movement of the body while deep slow breathing happens in this pose.
- **Improves the entire nervous system:** Considering the joints being activated and toned in this pose, and also with the deep stretch of the entire spine, the entire nervous system to improves and get toned.

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- **Improves the stamina and immune system:** With the expansion of the chest, the breathing improves which takes care of the immune system. Building endurance here, trying to hold the pose for a longer duration, builds stamina too. Hence the overall body gets toned and builds stamina.
  - **Improves the balance and hence builds focus:** To stay in Utkatasana, the strength of the muscles plays a great role, improving the balance of the body. To remain in balance, focus plays a great role here. In all, balance and focus go hand in hand and Utkatasana is both physically and mentally taxing.
  - **Excellent for athletes:** This pose strengthens the quadriceps, hamstrings and the calves, which are the essential muscles for most athletes. Hence can be considered as a great pose to be added to the regular routine of stretches for athletes. The tightening of the knees in this pose, also helps to absorb shock, which is a great advantage for athletes.
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- Starting in Tadasana
  - Exhale as you bend your knees and move your hips back as if you were sitting down on a chair. Draw your lower abdomen in and up to support your lower back
  - Send your hips back rather than your knees forward, so that you can still see your toes
  - Inhale as you raise your arms up around your ears and soften your shoulders
  - Keep reaching higher, while sitting lower for 5 to 10 breaths
  - To come back into in Tadasana, exhale, as you press your feet down to straighten your legs and then bring your arms down to your sides.

### Beginners' tips for chair pose

- Think about squeezing your legs together as if they are one to make them stronger. You can use a block or rolled up towel to practice this – imagine you are squeezing it and also trying to shoot it out behind you as you internally rotate the thighs
- However, you can also bring your feet wider apart to make your base a little more stable if you need to
- Press firmly through the feet to create more lift in the upper body. Keep the weight evenly distributed between the heels and the balls of the feet
- Practice the action in the legs first with your hands on your hips or the back of a (stable) chair for support.

### Watch out for

- If you have knee or ankle injuries you may prefer to substitute Childs pose with a different resting pose such as Savasana / Corpse Pose
- If you feel compression or discomfort in your hips – or if you feel any constriction in the pose, try a wider-legged variation.

### Variations

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- Protect your knees: Double check that they don't come forward over the line of the toes. You should be able to see the toes.
- If you have discomfort in your shoulders or neck, bring your arms wider apart and/or lower. They can be pointing straight out in front of you or down to the floor. Alternatively you could bend the elbows and point the fingertips upwards.
- Make sure your lower belly is drawn back to the spine to protect your lower back. Try not to overarch the lumbar spine.

*Ref: ekhartyoga.com*