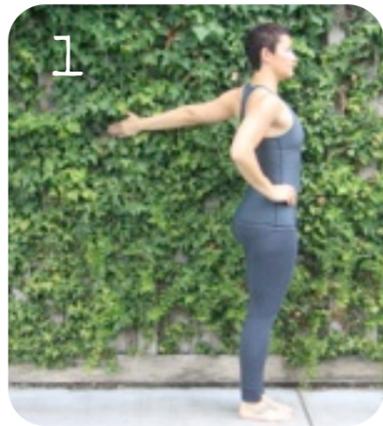


Run Yoga 1: Stretches

This sequence is targeted at all those spots that tend to get tight when you run: glutes, hamstrings, quads, and iliotibial band. Regular stretching (preferably post rather than pre-run) can improve your run times and significantly reduce knee pain, shin splints, and the risk of other injury. It's always best to learn yoga from a qualified teacher before you start practicing at home, and never over-stretch!

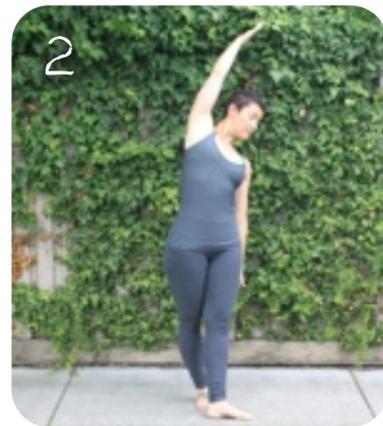
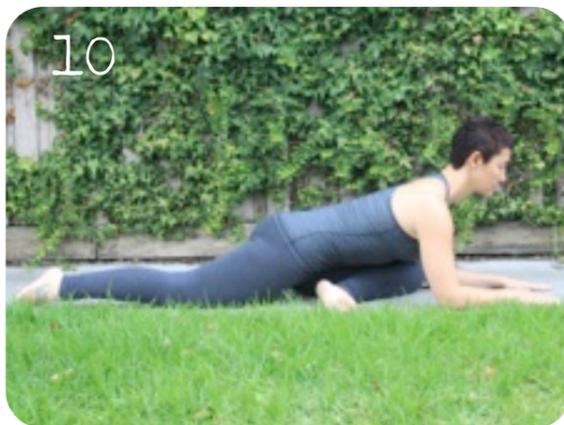


1. Standing chest stretch

This is nod to the fact that everything is connected: regularly stretching your chest will improve both your posture and your breathing. Make sure you don't feel a pinch at the back of the shoulder, keep your torso at 90 degrees to the wall, and don't overarch your lower back. Do both sides.

10. Pigeon pose, torso down

If you feel OK after a while in pigeon, ease your torso towards the ground, breathing comfortably and working in your pain free range of motion. Stay a few breaths then ease your way up and repeat the sequence from 2 - 10 on the other side!

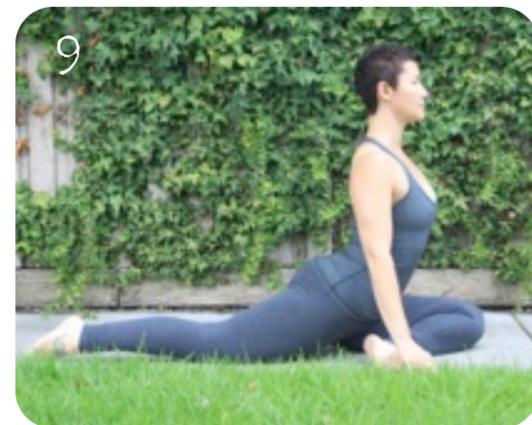


2. Standing ITB stretch

Your iliotibial band (ITB) runs down the outside of your thigh from hip to knee, and when it's tight it can cause knee pain. This stretch is great for that! Cross your right leg behind your left and then stretch your right arm into the air. Breathe and relax into the stretch!

9. Pigeon pose, torso up

Bend your left knee between your hands. Your knee should be lined up with your hip. It doesn't matter if your front hip is on the ground, but both hip bones should point forward. Back leg straight behind you, and breathe! If you feel pressure in your knee or ankle, come out of the pose.

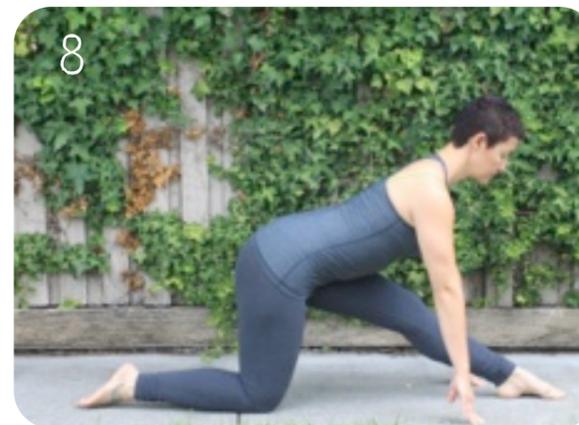


3. Cross-legged toe-touch

Another great pose for warding off knee pain. From your standing ITB stretch, bend forward from your hips to bring your hands to the ground, or to rest on your front leg. Keep your back as straight as possible - it's always OK to bend your knees a bit!

8. Ankle stretch

Now, stay in the hamstring stretch, but see if you can point your toes and get the sole of your foot onto the ground. It's not as easy as it looks, and if you cramp up, you've done too much. Stay here and breathe.



4. Runner's lunge

From your forward bend, step your right leg back into a high lunge. Stay on the toes of your back foot, make sure your front knee is lined up over your middle two toes, and raise your arms. Keep your front knee in a safe angle, as pictured. Stay for a few breaths.

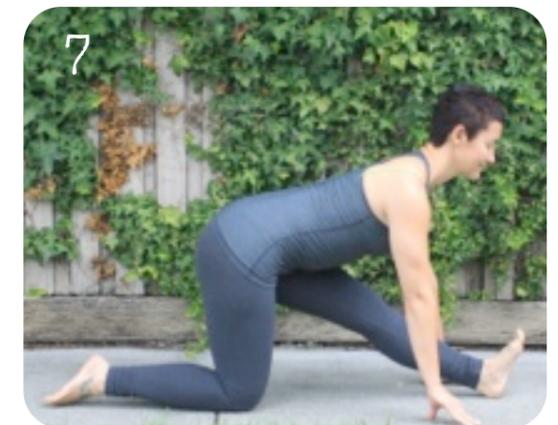
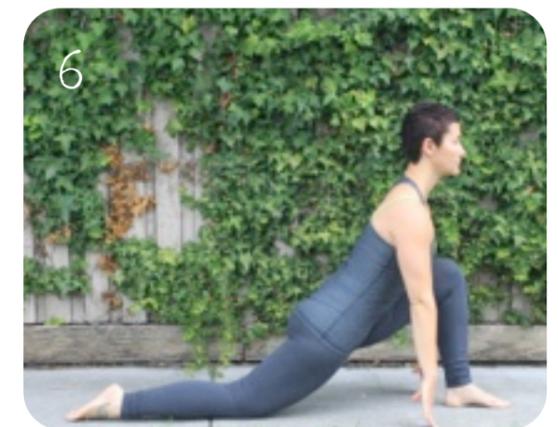
6 & 7. Half splits

Ugh, all this lunging! It's great for your hips though. Bring your back knee to the ground (6), making sure you don't feel too much pressure in it, and then as you exhale, rock back into the kneeling hamstring stretch (7) - front leg straight, toes curled off the ground. Inhale to rock forward again, exhale to rock back. Do this a few times, moving with your breath.



5. Low lunge, knee up

From you Runner's lunge, exhale to bring your hands to either side of your left foot. If they don't reach the ground comfortably, you can rest your forearms on your front thigh. Stay here and rock back and forth slightly to increase the stretch in your back thigh.



About the author: Nadine Fawell has been teaching yoga for a decade, to thousands of people including athletes of all stripes. She is a widely published yoga writer, released her first DVD in January 2012, and presents at yoga conferences and festivals. Her business, **mm...Yoga**, brings yoga to you (if you are in Melbourne!) and tailors the classes to your needs and goals.

If you liked these exercises, you can get more - even an actual live yoga teacher - at www.melbournemobileyoga.com.au

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