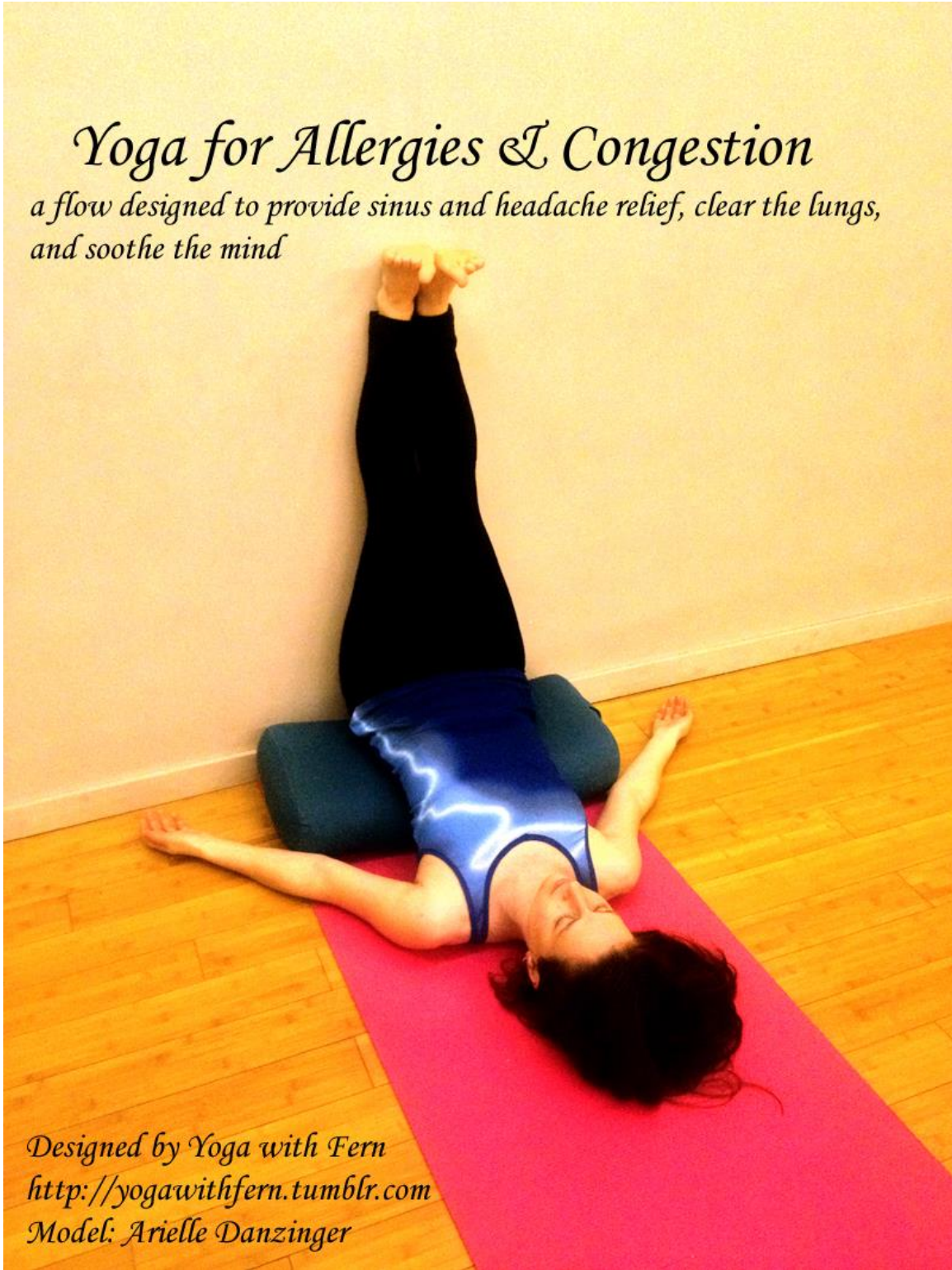


# *Yoga for Allergies & Congestion*

*a flow designed to provide sinus and headache relief, clear the lungs,  
and soothe the mind*



*Designed by Yoga with Fern  
<http://yogawithfern.tumblr.com>  
Model: Arielle Danzinger*

*A*llergies trigger inflammation in the body and symptoms are worsened by stress reactions that cause physiological responses, including the release of stress hormones and histamine. Relaxation, on the other hand, diminishes the fight-or-flight response, thereby reducing allergic symptoms.

Through the process of relaxation, the nervous system tells the immune system to hold its fire. Once the immune system has backed off, the inflammation, congestion, and mucus decrease, as symptoms begin to diminish.

Like a massage, yoga poses that lengthen, stretch, and loosen the back, open the chest and twist out toxins from the digestive system will help tremendously toward eliminating nasal and lung congestion.

This sequence is fantastic for all levels. It aims to restore your energy and immunity, deeply relax your nervous system, and destroy the allergy symptoms that may be causing discomfort, brain fog, and fatigue.

Props you will need:

2 blocks

1 yoga bolster

2 yoga blankets

This sequence has been prepared for a 90-minute duration. Set a timer on your phone (the iPhone has a timer with beautiful chimes) the poses that recommend a time duration, or come out of the poses when you feel ready to move on. If a certain pose feels incredibly relaxing and healing, let yourself stay there as long as you need before moving on to the next pose. This is your yoga practice, and I hope you find peace, comfort, and relief from your symptoms through this sequence as I have.

Always,

*Fern Olivia*

### **Meditation & Pranayama**

Come to a cross-legged seat on your mat, and sit on a blanket or block so your hips are elevated above your knees. Close your eyes, palms face up on knees or in *Chin mudra* (as shown) with thumb and forefinger on each of both hands join as a zero. This mudrā activates the diaphragm, allowing deep "stomach-breathing", as the diaphragm pushes out the internal organs when it descends towards the pelvis on inhalation. Slow rhythmic breathing makes *prana* (energy, breath) flow in the pelvis and in the legs.

And as you inhale, silently say "Let" exhale silently say "Go." Inhale "Let" exhale "Go." After a 5-7 minute meditation, prepare for 10 rounds of *pranayama* (breath control) practice.

Inhale deeply and slowly through the nose to a count of 4.

Hold your breath for a count of 4. While holding your breath concentrate on the space between your eyebrows and try to perceive a glowing light there.

Exhale through the nose to a count of 6.

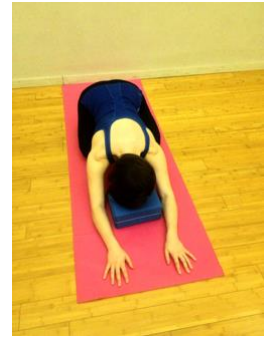
Repeat 10 times.

This simple looking breathing exercise has powerful healing effects. The space between the forehead is the location of the *Ajna chakra* (one of the seven chakras or energy centers in the body). The longer exhalation time helps to push out all the impure air from your lungs – exactly what we are going for to prevent or heal those allergy and congestion symptoms.



**Childs pose** *Balāsana,*  
**variation**

Come onto your hands and knees, press back into child's pose with third eye pressing into block. Stay here for 8-10 breaths.



**Downward dog** *Adho Mukha Svanāsana,*  
**variation**

Press back into downward facing dog, pressing evenly into both palms and stretching heels toward the mat. Press forehead onto a block at the height setting that works for you. Take 5 deep breaths here, working to lift your hips up and back, keeping belly hollow and abdomen engaged.



**Standing Forward Fold** *Uttanāsana,*  
**variation**

On your last exhale, bend knees and walk feet forward to hang over your legs. Inhale look up and lengthen the spine, exhale hinge at the hips and fold over legs, resting forehead on a block at the setting that works for you. You may need to walk feet out hip width apart or mat width, knees may be bent or straight. Stay here for 5 breaths.

Inhale slowly roll up to stand, Tadasana. Inhale palms around and up overhead into Urdhva Hastasana, exhale swan dive arms and hinge forward over straight legs to Uttanāsana folding forward fold, inhale look up lengthen flat back Ardha Uttanāsana, exhale release palms to the floor, lower through Chaturanga, inhale Urdhva Mukha Svanāsana upward facing dog, exhale hips up and back to Downward Dog.



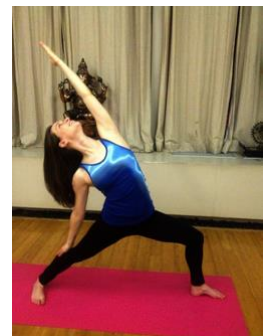
**Warrior II** *Virabhadrasana II*

Inhale right foot forward in between palms and open arms and hips into Warrior II. Right thigh is parallel to the floor, knee over ankle. Torso is long, tailbone tucks underneath you, strong warrior arms extending out of each shoulder. Gaze over your right middle finger. Take 5 breaths here.



**Peaceful Warrior**

Inhale tip back Peaceful Warrior, left arm reaches down left thigh, right arm up over right ear, gaze at your right palm. Keep that right leg bent deeply so your knee tracks right over your ankle, thigh is parallel to the floor. Feel the length in your right side body. Take 5 breaths here.



**Wide legged forward bend** *Prasarita Padottanasana,*  
**variation**

Exhale back into Warrior II. Pivot right foot to be parallel with left foot. Place hands on hips, inhale puff up your chest and exhale fold over through a flat back, palms to the floor under shoulders. Inhale look up and lengthen spine, exhale walk palms in line with feet and rest crown of head on a block at the setting that works for you. Stay here for 5 breaths.

Inhale start to walk the fingertips forward under shoulders. Exhale hands to hips. Inhale scoop your pelvis under and come up to stand. Pivot your right foot to face the front of the room. Exhale bend the front knee and open arms and hips into Warrior II. Take a beautiful deep inhale here, exhale as you cartwheel palms to floor to frame front foot and step back to plank position, take the Vinyasa through Chaturanga and Baby Cobra or Upward Facing Dog, or simply press back into Downward Facing Dog. Repeat Warrior II, Peaceful Warrior, and Wide Leg Forward Bend on other side.



**One-leg King Pigeon pose** *Eka Pada Rajakapotasana*

Inhale lift the left leg up and back behind you, coming into 3-legged down dog. Exhale open the hip and point the toe. Inhale bring the left knee forward and place it on the mat behind your left elbow and shin as close to parallel to the front edge of the mat as you can. Keep the back leg straight, toes pressing down, look back and make sure your ankle is straight. Square hips and puff up chest, take a deep inhale, exhale walk the fingertips forward, resting your third eye on a block or the mat.

Spend 1-3 minutes here. Walk fingertips back in line with hips. Press into palms and extend left leg out and back behind you into 3-legged down dog. Release left foot next to right. Repeat pigeon on the other side.



**Child's pose** *Balasana,*  
**variation**

From Downward dog, drop knees, come onto all fours, sit back into Child's pose. In this variation, arms along side the body, palms facing up. You may press third eye to the floor or turn your head to one side. Stay here for 5 breaths.



**Thread the needle**  
**pose** *Sucirandhrasana*

Return to all fours, knees under hips. Inhale lift the left palm up along your ear, feel the length in your left side, exhale slide it under your right armpit. Twist to the right as you lower onto your right shoulder. Resist the right hip back, keeping hips square and even. Stay here for 10 breaths. Press into the right hand to come up and repeat on the other side.

Twisting poses compress the internal organs, releasing toxins and cleansing the body. Twists are beneficial for abdominal health. This pose also incorporates a side stretch that opens the chest and facilitates clearing of the lungs.



**Bridge** *Setubandasana,*  
**variation**

Lie down on your back with your knees bent. Plant your feet parallel, hip width apart and keep your thighs parallel, thighs rotating internally. Heels are under knees. Place a block on the lower, middle, or highest setting under your sacrum, being careful not to rest it under your lower back. Rest the weight of your pelvis on the block. Arms are out alongside the body, palms face up.

Observe your breath. As you stand on your shoulders and feet, the support of the block



under your sacrum allows you to take deeper, more complete breaths. This will open up your lungs, helping to clear congestion. As you inhale, focus on spreading your rib cage from the center towards the sides. As you exhale, maintain the lift of your back ribs and a softness in the front of your throat. Relax the muscles around your eyes and temples. Turn your gaze inward toward the heart. Deep, even Ujjayi breaths.

Stay in this pose for 3-10 minutes, then remove the block, lower down to your back and stretch legs out long in front of you.

**Fish pose**  
*Matsyendrasana,*  
**variation**

Place a block or a bolster under your shoulder blades and lay down so that your back is supported and the bend is present in the spine, you can adjust your body to be more comfortable as you allow the block to support you. A block under the head may feel good also and will prevent you from over-extending your neck. The props will allow you to hold this backbend for as long as you are comfortable, helping to open and broaden the chest with each breath you take. With each exhale, let your body sink a little deeper into the posture, eventually allowing yourself to fully relax while your chest is slowly and gently stretched.



Matsyasana is such a wonderful posture to help open and broaden the chest. Through opening and broadening the chest muscles we remove the strain that is placed on the shoulders, neck and upper back, thus allowing those muscles to be relaxed.

Stay in this pose for 3-10 minutes, then remove the props and lower onto your back for a moment, with your legs out in front of you.

**Supine Spinal Twist,**  
*Supta Matsyendrasana*

Lie on your back with knees bent, soles of feet on floor. Bring your knees to your chest and shift your hips to the right, knees to the left, so your hips are under your right shoulder. Look over your right shoulder with your arms extended out parallel to your knees. Your knees should be naval height or higher. Work on releasing your left knee and your right shoulder to the floor. Hold for 10 breaths before drawing your knees back into your chest and repeating the other side.

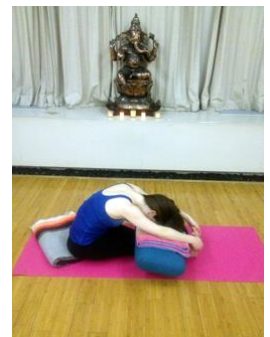
Variations: Before twisting, take your legs into the air and wrap your right leg around your left, coming into Eagle legs. Then twist, bringing the right knee over to the left side of the body.



**Seated forward fold**  
*Paschimottasana,*  
**variation**

Stack bolster, blankets, and/or blocks on your thighs to allow your head to rest on the props once you have folded forward.

Legs extended out in front, feet are flexed. Roll the inner thighs together. Place palms on the mat next to Hips. Inhale press into palms sit tall, exhale walk fingertips forward as you hinge forward from the hips, keeping the spine long. Rest forehead on blanket or blocks. Stay here for 8-10 breaths.



**Supported Bound**  
**Angle, Supta**  
*Baddha Konasana,*  
**variation**

Bend knees, place feet on floor. Place soles of feet together, let knees fall to sides. Place a block under each outer thigh even if you don't "need" to. (You want to completely support weight of legs so that you experience no traction in the sacral ligaments, which are extremely vulnerable in this position.)

Relax abdomen, open chest. Stay here for 5-10 minutes.



**Legs up the wall** *Viparita Karani, variation*

Use a yoga bolster or fold two thick blankets lengthwise and stack one neatly atop the other to create a support that is at least six inches thick, about 10 inches wide, and long enough to prop up your hips in their entirety. Place your support near a wall with the long edge running parallel to the baseboard, leaving a gap of just a few inches between the support and the wall.

Sit on the support with the left side of your body next to the wall and your feet on the floor. Using your hands for support, shift your weight onto the outer right hip, then lower your right shoulder to the ground so that you can pivot your pelvis and sweep your legs up the wall. Settle your back onto the floor, aligning your spine so that an imaginary line drawn from your nose to your navel would be perpendicular to the baseboard. There should be ample room for your shoulder blades to rest comfortably on the ground, and just enough space between your hips and the wall to allow your tailbone to dip gently toward the floor.



Legs should be straight, the anklebones should touch each other, and the backs of the thighs should rest against the wall, offering a gentle support that increases the restorative benefits of the pose. If the backs of your thighs are not touching the wall and you feel like they could without strain, bend your legs and shimmy your hips a few inches closer to the wall, settling more of your lower back onto the support. Scrub your feet up the wall if needed.

You may need to experiment with the distance between the support and the wall until you find a position that gently stretches the backs of your legs but doesn't cause any pain. Check to see that your upper body is balanced and spacious too. Drop your shoulders away from your ears. Rest your hands in a comfortable position with arms out to the sides, palms face up.

Let yourself float in this soothing silence for as long as you desire.

When your body signals that it is ready to move back into the world of action, slowly slide your legs down the wall, bending your knees close to your chest. Rest here for a few moments before pressing your feet into the wall and sliding your hips past the blankets and onto the floor. Don't hurry—you've just emerged from the depths and may need a few moments to reacclimate to the world around you.

**Final Relaxation Pose** *Savasana, variation*

This final restorative pose is especially beneficial to ease sinus and breathing problems as it opens the chest and relaxes the intercostal muscles between the ribs. In addition to the head, chest, and heart-opening benefits of this supported Savasana, this pose also helps to alleviate menstrual pain, and calms the mind.



The short end of bolster should just be under the sacrum, touching tailbone. Completely let your mind and body go. Let go of tension held in any area of the body, let yourself completely relax. If you have one, place an eye pillow over eyes as you relax in Savasana for 8-15 minutes.

Coming out of Savasana, slowly roll off the bolster and come onto your right side in fetal position. Stay here for a couple of breaths, feeling the breath come back to the body. Press into your palms and come up to sit in a cross legged seat.

Keeping your eyes closed, observe how you feel in your body, your breath, your mind, and your heart. Ask yourself whether you feel a little softer and more centered than you did before you came to your mat. Perhaps your sinus congestion or headache has eased, perhaps you feel more grounded and relaxed. Take a beautiful deep inhale, exhale ((OM))

For more yoga, nutrition, and inspiration, visit <http://yogawithfern.tumblr.com/>