

Rotation

Most of our movement requires some sort of action in our spine; from side bending, rounding (flexing), arching (extending) to rotating. It's the combination of these movements that allow us to move through space in 3 dimensions. Unfortunately, many of us lose the potential to fully move our spine to its full capacity due to living a non-physical and unhealthy lifestyle. Some losses can occur if joints fuse due to trauma, surgery, or arthritis, but most loss in range of motion comes from lack of organization and inefficient habits and patterns which can create shortness in the muscles, tendons, ligaments, and fascia (connective tissues) limiting mobility in the nearby joints.

Your Spine

Lets take a look at our spine. Each section is designed differently allowing a variety of movements to happen in our body. Our neck, where our cervical spine is located, is where the largest range of movement in the spine is found, with the ability to rotate, flex, extend and side bend. Our thoracic spine where our ribcage connects, are shaped in a way that allows rotation to occur with only a small amount of movement available for flexion, extension and side bending. Our lower back, where our lumbar spine is located, is designed for flexion and extension, has some ability to side bend, but little ability to rotate. Our sacrum is 5 vertebrae, which are fused together. It sits in our pelvis, connected by a joint (sacral iliac joint). There is little movement in our SI joints, so our sacrum should move when our pelvis does.



Benefits of Twisting

In yoga every pose has its benefits. Practicing twisting postures affects the circulatory system, our musculoskeletal system and our internal organs, such as the kidneys, liver, adrenal glands and the digestive system. During a twist our organs are compressed, pushing out blood filled with byproducts and toxins. When we release the twist, fresh oxygenated blood flows in, leaving a cleansing and refreshing effect on the torso organs and associated glands. Twists can also help build mental focus, concentration and awareness.

Twisting with Awareness

There are a couple important things to remember when doing any rotation in your spine. Your position in space will influence how you twist so approach your supine, seated and standing twist all with care and awareness and remember they should never be forced. Before rotation can happen safely, extension in the spine must occur. Twist Be sure not to engage unnecessarily in your core, allowing the muscles that are meant to engage for the movement to engage. Next, remember that everything is connected - the movement should move through your pelvis, spine, shoulders, head and eyes.

Next time you're practicing yoga, snowboarding, downhill or cross-country skiing, playing hockey, at the gym, checking your blind spot while driving, walking or in your everyday movements observe how it is that you move your spine. It's only through awareness that we can explore other possibilities that may allow us to move more efficiently and with greater ease.



** Please note that my newsletters and articles are simply my opinion. I am sharing with you what I am studying and exploring. I encourage you to be curious yourself. Be your own teacher and enjoy what you discover through your own journey. Happy learning.