



# Alleviate IBS Symptoms With These Four Yoga Poses

by EMMI SCOTT

---

## Yoga For IBS

Yoga is one of the many natural ways to treat your irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) symptoms. While a healthy yoga practice will have numerous benefits for both your mind and body, there are also specific postures that can help with IBS.

### **Mental Benefits of Yoga**

While yoga may be a more naturally physical practice, it also holds many benefits for the mind. They include:

- Stress relief
- Increased concentration
- Building resilience
- Self-compassion and self-awareness
- Establishing a mind-body connection

Additionally, studies have shown that yoga can help relieve symptoms of sleep disorders, depression, and ADHD.

### **Physical Benefits of Yoga**

In addition to improving IBS symptoms, yoga has many physical benefits for regular practitioners.

- Improved strength, balance, and flexibility
- Decreased blood sugar levels
- Lower cholesterol levels
- Increased immune function

There is an intersection between the mental and physical benefits of yoga.

As yoga practitioners become more self-aware and establish a strong mind-body connection, they tend to build healthier habits off of the yoga mat.

These may include eating a healthier diet, decreasing alcohol and caffeine intake, and quitting other unhealthy habits that they may not have been aware of previously.

In this way, yoga informs an overall healthier lifestyle for those who practice it.

### **Yoga's Effect on the Nervous System**

#### **The Autonomic Nervous System**

---

The autonomic nervous system controls heart rate, blood pressure, and digestion. It is made up of two parts, the sympathetic nervous system, and the parasympathetic nervous system.

The sympathetic nervous system's job is to activate a fight or flight response in a crisis. It raises blood pressure and heart rate and makes extra energy available to respond to a perceived threat.

The parasympathetic nervous system stimulates healing and regenerating the body. It is connected to the immune system and digestion.

For those who have anxiety disorders, as many people with IBS do, the sympathetic nervous system activates more frequently. Nervous anxiety can lead to exhaustion, as much of your body's energy is being used to prepare for a fight or flight response that may be unnecessary.

Since research suggests that people with IBS have a colon that is more sensitive to stress, too much time in fight or flight mode can cause digestive distress.

### **Activating the Parasympathetic Nervous System**

Fortunately, activities that promote relaxation which will activate the parasympathetic nervous system.

Only one part of the autonomic nervous system, the sympathetic or parasympathetic, can work at a time. If you activate the parasympathetic nervous system, the sympathetic cannot use up the energy you need for nourishment and rejuvenation.

Many yoga practices switch to the parasympathetic nervous system. They include gentle postures, slowed breathing, and meditation.

Some research has also shown that practicing yoga techniques that activate the sympathetic nervous system followed by ones that engage the parasympathetic can lead to deeper relaxation.

### **How Yoga Soothes IBS**

Along with reducing the stress that can cause digestive pain, yoga can also help restore function to the digestive system.

While these postures alone may help your IBS symptoms, a robust yoga practice will provide you with more benefits. Try practicing yoga regularly to decrease stress and promote your overall well-being.

You may want to search online for yoga videos for digestion. If you attend yoga classes, tell your teacher about your IBS symptoms so that they can incorporate helpful poses into class.

### **The Four Best Yoga Poses for IBS**

#### **Bhujangasana – Cobra Pose**

Cobra pose improves blood circulation and stimulates your abdominal organs.

1. Lie face down on the floor. Press your hands into the floor next to your shoulders, and hug your elbows in next to your body. Press your pelvis, thighs, and feet into the floor.
2. Inhale and slowly straighten your arms. Keep your pelvis and legs pressing into the floor. You can maintain a bend in your elbows.
3. Remain here for five slow breaths. Try to maintain a steady posture, not moving up and down with your breath.
4. On your last exhale, bend your arms to lower yourself slowly back to the floor. Lower your belly, chest, and then your head.

---

## **Apanasana – Knee-to-Chest Pose**

Knee-to-chest pose can help release gas in the intestines. It is helpful when you feel gassy and bloated.

1. Lie on your back with your legs extended and your arms down to your sides.
2. Breathe in, exhale, and pull both of your knees to your chest. Wrap your arms around them and clasp your hands.
3. You can stay here, breathing slowly, or add a gentle twist.
4. Slowly place your left leg back on the ground, extending it. Using your left hand, draw your right knee across your body to the left. Keep both shoulders on the ground.
5. Bring your right knee back to the center of your body, and pull your left knee back up. Hug your knees to your torso again.
6. Repeat the twist with the left leg.

## **Uttanasana – Standing Forward Bend**

1. A standing forward bend will work your abdominal muscles to relieve constipation.
2. Stand with your feet hip distance apart. Inhale, raising your arms over your head, shoulder distance apart with your palms facing in.
3. Exhale and bend forward from your hips, lengthening your torso.
4. With a slight bend in your knees, set your palms or fingertips on the floor.
5. Stay here, breathing deeply. Each time you inhale, lengthen your torso a little more. With each exhale, bend a bit deeper into the pose.
6. With your arms extended, slowly lift your torso back up while inhaling.