



Downward Facing Dog is one of the most frequently done poses in a yoga practice. If this pose is particularly challenging for you, there are modifications; however, as an integral part of a yoga practice because of its many benefits\*, it is encouraged that everyone practice this pose until it is done with ease and grace.

\*Benefits include ankle, calf, hamstring, and shoulder stretches, release of the low back and neck, strengthening of the abs and shoulders, and practicing a fully aligned spine

#### Alignment Cues of Downward Facing Dog:

- Begin in plank pose with the shoulders over the wrists and the feet hip distance apart
- Press the hips up and back while pulling the belly in
- Widen the fingers, pressing them into the mat; reach the heels towards the mat
- Spread the shoulders apart, pressing the outsides of the upper arms away from each other
- Look between the big toes so the neck is relaxed and the whole spine is straight
- Before deeply settling into the pose, bend and straighten the knees, roll the shoulders, sway the hips, and rock forward to plank and back to down dog a few times to loosen the joints
- On each inhale, pull the belly & lift the hips; on each exhale, draw the arms closer to the mat

## MODIFIED DOWN DOG FOR TIGHT HAMSTRINGS/LOW BACK



MANY people live with tight hamstrings, so MANY people need these modifications. It is important to stop at your limit rather than force yourself into a pose that the hamstrings can barely handle. Listen to what your body is telling you and adjust as needed.

- If you know you have *low back pain*, always begin down dog with bent knees.
- If your hamstrings are extremely tight, modify by bending the knees and placing blocks/books/folded towels under your hands. This lessens the pull on the hamstrings.
- Follow the rest of the alignment cues as they are.

To practice stretching the hamstrings, lift onto your toes, keeping the knees bent and pressing the hips up. Slowly straighten the legs (as far as is comfortable) and reach the heels back towards the mat. Repeat this several times in a session. Slowly but surely, your hamstrings will lengthen.