



# cat and COW yoga poses

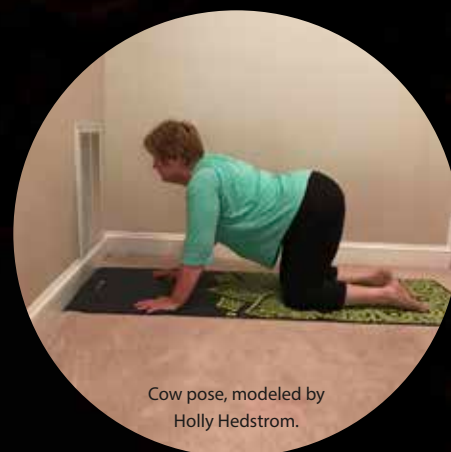
here's to your health ...

By Glenmore resident **Holly Hedstrom**

One of the poses commonly taught in a hatha yoga class is cat and cow. The health benefits of cat and cow pose are many. These poses improve posture and balance, strengthen and stretch the spine and neck, and stretch the hips, abdomen, and back. The poses also increase coordination. Cat and cow are frequently done sequentially and can massage and stimulate organs in the belly, like the kidneys and adrenal glands. Repetitions of cat and cow can help create emotional balance, relieve stress, and calm the mind. Coordinating the breath with these movements can help bring us into the present moment.

Let's look at each of these poses:

**1** Start on your hands and knees, or what is sometimes called table pose, with the wrists directly below shoulders, and knees directly below the hips. Place the shins and knees hip-width apart, the head is centered in a neutral position, and gaze slightly downward. Keep the arms straight throughout the next two poses.



Cow pose, modeled by Holly Hedstrom.

**2** Next move into cat pose. As you exhale, draw the belly toward the spine and round the back up toward the ceiling, head and tailbone tipping down, in a pose that rounds the back in the opposite stretch of the cow. This pose can look like a cat rounding its back up toward the ceiling. To increase the abdominal massage, draw the belly button firmly toward the spine as you complete the exhalation.



Cat pose, modeled by resident Lizzie McCowen.

**3** Repeat these movements, inhaling into cow and exhaling into cat at your own breath pace. Spend some time moving back and forth, undulating the spine in convex and concave positions as you breathe. You may notice you feel taller after these stretches, and you may feel less stiffness in the spine by spending just a little bit of time in cat and cow poses.

**2** Begin by moving into cow pose. Inhale as you drop the belly toward the mat while lifting the chin, chest, and tailbone, gazing up toward the ceiling. Broaden across the shoulder blades and make sure the shoulders stay away from the ears.

Holly is a registered yoga teacher with the Yoga Alliance and a member of the Integral Yoga Teachers Association since 2002. She is also a member of the Labyrinth Society, dedicated to the education/celebration of the power of the labyrinth, an ancient form of silent walking meditation and metaphor for the path of life. She is a third-degree Reiki master practitioner/teacher since 2006. She has taught pro-bono yoga classes at the House of Ruth homeless shelter in DC and has been teaching hatha yoga since 2001, primarily in the corporate environment. She received her restorative yoga teaching training from Satchidananda Ashram Yogaville in early 2015 and currently teaches both hatha and restorative yoga at the fitness center in Glenmore. She maintains a Reiki practice in Fairfax, VA. She has also volunteered Reiki services at the Virginia Hospital Center to provide comfort care and energetic support to cancer patients and their caregivers.

Her most recent adventures involve learning more about the healing power of essential oils for use in both restorative yoga classes and Reiki sessions for her clients. She is excited to receive more teacher training at Yogaville soon to become certified in adaptive yoga, so she can more successfully offer adaptive poses as well as chair yoga classes.

Holly and her husband Tom relocated from Arlington, VA, to Glenmore last June, and they are both enjoying life at Glenmore.

Glenmore Life magazine is looking for other health and wellness professionals who would like to be periodic contributors to the "Here's to Your Health" section of the magazine. If you would like to learn more about how you can participate, please contact Nancy Whearty at [glenmorelife@gmail.com](mailto:glenmorelife@gmail.com).

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