

Mardi Crane-Godreau and Peter Payne
One Medical Center Dr. Lebanon, NH 03765
Phone: 603-653-9972
E-Mail: Deborah.J.Shinnlinger@dartmouth.edu
Margaret.A.Crane@dartmouth.edu or
Peter.Payne@dartmouth.edu

Lying Down With Form

Lying down is a good starting point; it is not very demanding! It is also good to practice when you are sick, very tired, or trying to get to sleep. Feel free to just do parts of it.

Lying down has two postures: Lying with Form, and Lying without Form. We will start with the first.

Start by sitting on the floor, legs in front of you, knees bent. Tuck your tail under and drop your chin to your chest; then supporting yourself with your hands on your knees (or elbows on the floor if necessary), slowly begin to unroll your back into the floor, keeping your knees bent. The aim is to flatten your back onto the floor as completely as possible, like unrolling a piece of paper.

First unroll your lower back; then as you reach the rib cage wrap your arms around your body and roll side-to-side to open up the space between your shoulder blades. As you reach the neck, out your hands behind your head, tuck the chin, and gently unroll the back of your neck as long as possible. Let the back of your head come to rest on the towel; adjust the towel so your head is not tipped back, and your chin does not put pressure on your throat.

Bring your feet up a bit towards your buttocks, and place them a bit over a foot apart, so it feels like they can balance. Place your hands on your body with your elbows a bit out to the side. Congratulations! You are "Lying with Form".

Feel that your whole back sinks down onto the floor; don't push it!
Feel that, as you sink, your back gets longer and wider, like cookie dough in an oven.
Leave your eyes open, so you stay alert and present while letting go.

To help this process, you can do three gentle stretches:

First Stretch:

Imagine one knee is pulled up towards the sky by a thread. Try to imagine strongly enough that your knee almost begins to move by itself (this is an important step, don't neglect it!) Let the knee come towards your chest, then hold it with your hands and gently pull it towards your shoulder, letting go of tension you encounter in the hip or thigh. Feel the pull all the way into the lower back. Continuing to hold the knee, slowly stretch the other leg out along the floor, and let go into the stretch. After a few moments imagine a thread pulling the knee up, and return that leg to the previous position. Finally, imagine that the foot of the leg you are still holding gets very heavy; then let the leg go so that the foot falls solidly onto the floor.

Take a few moments to feel the difference between the legs; then repeat with the other side.

Second stretch:

Put your hands behind the back of your neck. Slide the hands up to the back of your head, lifting slightly.

so the back if your neck lengthens. Keep sliding your hands up the back of the head until the head settles back into the towel; feel the length and softened of the back of your neck.

Third stretch:

Bring the arms up straight so the fingers are pointing at the sky. Slowly bring the arms up over the head, keeping them straight. As they go down towards the floor above your head, you may notice a tendency for your mid-back to lift off the floor; don't let it! Feel the stretch in the front of your chest and shoulders, let go. Now slowly move your hands apart, keeping close to the floor, rotating your palms to point up above your head. Keep going until your arms are at 60 degrees to your body. Pause and rest. Then, leaving your elbows on the floor, bring your hands to rest on your body.

Now just enjoy the feeling of letting go into gravity, allowing your body to be totally supported by the ground. Let the back lengthen and widen.