



BACK PAIN IN URDHVA MUKHA SVANASANA

Here's What Your Body Is Telling You
Urdhva Mukha Śvānāsana (Upward-Facing Dog) is a cornerstone pose in the Ashtanga Yoga practice. It strengthens the arms, shoulders, and spine while opening the chest and abdomen. Like many Ashtanga postures, it combines strength, flexibility, and mindful alignment.

Despite its benefits, many practitioners experience discomfort in the lower back, difficulty keeping the legs straight, or pressure on the wrists while trying to lift the chest forward and up. If you notice any of these challenges, tight hip flexors may be the cause. When the hip flexors – especially the psoas – are tight, they tilt the pelvis forward, increasing the arch in the lower back and putting pressure on the lumbar vertebrae, which over time can lead to lower back discomfort or strain. Preparing the hips with gentle stretches can help you practice this pose with more ease, comfort, and safety.

Gentle Hip Flexor Stretch

Lie on your belly in Sphinx Pose, resting on your forearms and elbows. Take a few breaths, softening your lower back. Press the pubic bone and front of the pelvis firmly into the mat. Gently push your chest forward without lifting your hips, creating a subtle opening in the hip flexors and extension through the lumbar spine. Extend your legs, lifting them slightly off the floor while keeping your feet parallel. Hold for 10–30 seconds, then relax.

Hip Flexor and Quadriceps Stretch

From Sphinx Pose, shift slightly to the left. Look over your right shoulder and hold the top of your right foot with your right hand. Gently draw the foot toward your right hip, keeping both hips grounded. Firmly press the pubic bone into the floor while pushing the chest forward. Draw the foot closer for a deeper stretch in the quadriceps and psoas muscles. Hold for 10–30 seconds, then release and rest. Repeat on the opposite side.

Full Upward-Facing Dog

Place your hands beside your ribcage, palms pressing firmly into the mat. On an inhale, lift the chest forward and upward, raising the hips and knees off the floor. Keep the elbows straight, legs active, and feet parallel. Broaden the shoulders, keeping them away from the ears. Keep the neck long and direct your gaze toward the tip of the nose (Nasāgre Drsti). Hold for 10–30 seconds, then release into Child's Pose to rest.

Final Thought

By understanding the connection between tight hip flexors and lower back strain, and by preparing your body with mindful stretches, Upward-Facing Dog becomes a pose of strength, openness, and ease – just as it is meant to be.