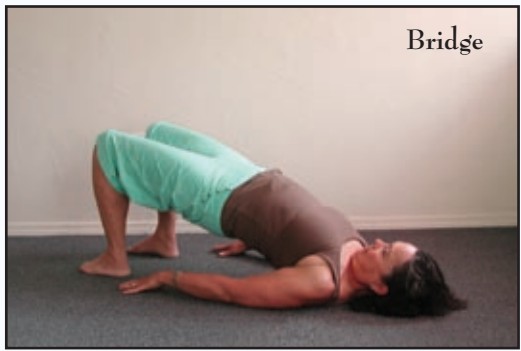


# Springing into Summer: The Yoga of a Healthy Transition

By Paola Feher

Ah, springtime in Montana. As the snow turns to mud, and the crocuses begin to poke out of the soil, our attention turns to the sun. Shedding our ski clothes, we don our biking shorts, running shoes, swimsuits and climbing garb. Many of us buy new apparel and tune up our old equipment, but we forget to think about preparing the most important piece of equipment we own: our body.

As we jubilantly play in the sun, the longer days often mean we are active for a longer period of time each day. Is our body really



ready for this transition that our mind embraces so readily.

Transition. A concept we talk a lot about in yoga. That limbo place between A and B: between our in-breath and our out-breath, between movement and stillness, between one posture and the next. A place that is often overlooked in an attempt to scurry quickly to point B.

When it comes to physical activity, springtime is a huge transition time. In my personal practice here in

Bozeman, one of the most common mistakes I see in the world of physical activity (from the gentle walker to the hard core athlete and everything in between) is skipping over these important seasonal transitions that, when attended to wisely, can help us build a strong physical base to avoid injury.

Whatever your sport of choice, being in good shape for one sport does not mean that you are automatically in shape for another. Each sport we pursue uses different muscles of the body in very different ways. While many athletes are not anatomy experts, it's important to have some idea of the muscles involved in order to prepare and

counterpose for your sport of choice.

With our excitement over the longer days stirring us to action, it can be hard to slow ourselves down. But it is important to prepare

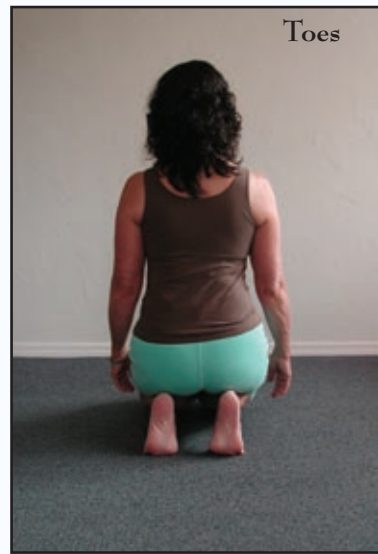
ourselves for our activity whether the sport is new for you for the very first time ever, or whether it's the first time this season for you. Either way, the idea is the same: start slowly. Starting slowly allows the muscles engaged to get strong over time. If we stress a joint (think, for example of the knee joint while cycling) when the surrounding muscles are not strong enough, the joint is then at risk for injury. Starting a sport slowly every workout (warming up), as well as over the course of

the season (starting with 20-30 minute bike rides and working your time and intensity up over the weeks) allows our muscles to get stronger in order to support us injury-free for the summer.

Muscles can be additionally strengthened with weights or exercises. In my practice I prescribe specific yoga-based exercises that target key muscles or muscle groups for strength.

Another component for decreasing injury during this transition is properly counter-posing for the sports we have just completed. When we are physically active, the muscles engaged are contracting

repetitively and, depending on the sport and the intensity, sometimes fairly intensely. The counter-pose we do requires a lengthening of contracted musculature to allow the muscle to return to a neutral position and not stay contracted. Muscles that stay contracted over the long haul have decreased circulation of blood and fluids as well as decreased nerve conduction. This can mean an accumulation of waste products and a decrease of oxygen and nutrients to the muscles. These situations can create pain and/or injury. In addition, lengthening muscles decreases recovery time, allowing you to get back to the sport you love with a faster turn around time. Muscles can be lengthened by doing specific stretches, or with a good massage.



It is my hope that I have given a small explanation as to why starting your sport this spring slowly is a good idea, and some tools to stay healthy during this transition. The slower you take the transition, the stronger you build your foundation, and the more you properly counter-pose, the healthier and longer your summer activity season will be!

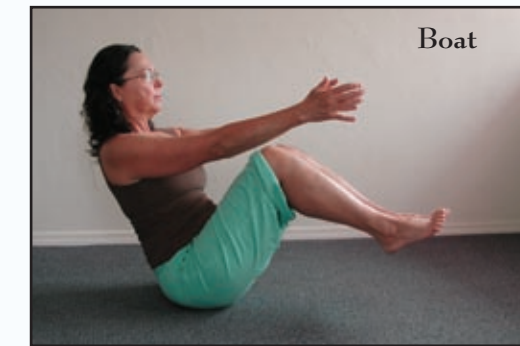
Below are just a few examples of some exercises I commonly prescribe. For strengthening thighs and legs, the warrior poses are excellent. For strengthening the core, variations of the boat pose are good. For strengthening the spine, backbends like cobra or bridge are good. Counter-posing for the thighs and legs will



include such exercises as lunges and calf drops and seated pure hip. Feet commonly need counter-posing after being bound in boots of all sorts: sitting on the heels is good.

If you'd like a tailored program for your athletic or injury needs, please contact me. I wish you all a very happy and healthy spring into summer!

*Paola Feher founded Bozeman Center for the Healing Arts in 1997 after receiving her master's degree in biomechanics. Her training emphasizes observation of human bodies in motion, focusing on*



*performance, injury prevention and rehabilitation. Paola is currently certified by the Yoga Alliance (E-RYT 500). Paola specializes in the treatment of chronic pain and injury rehabilitation. She can be contacted at [www.bozemanhealingarts.com](http://www.bozemanhealingarts.com).*

