

# BANDHAS 101

ENERGETIC LOCKS

# BANDHAS

- Bandhas are the energetic locks (mudras) of asana practice that assist in correct movements of Prana vayus.
- Bandhas are fruitful for the brain centers, the nadis (channels through which prana streams) and the chakras (energy centres).
- They purify, remove blockages and harmonize and balance the self.
- Bandhas help direct the body to best alignment.



## Bandha Basics



## THE THREE MAIN INTERNAL LOCKS USED IN YOGA

JALANDHARA BANDHA - THROAT  
LOCK

UDDIYANA BANDHA - CORE LOCK

MULA BANDHA - ROOT LOCK

# MULA BANDHA: ROOT LOCK

MULA = ROOT, OR FOUNDATION

BANDHA = LOCK OR BIND

- Mūla Bandha is a primary Bandha in traditional and modern yoga.
- Located at the base of pelvis, perineum
- Uses: Allows upward energy.
- Strengthens pelvic floor,
- stimulates pelvic nerves,
- Encourages the endocrine system
- Supports the excretory system
- Inspires a healthy reproductive system
- Relieves constipation
- Alleviates depression.
- Provides a strong foundation.
- Creates lightness to asana practice.
- Held throughout the asana practice
- Chakra connection: Energizes Muladhara Chakra
- Caution: mula bandha can temporarily reduce blood flow and it is advised to not engage during the first few days of one's moon cycle.



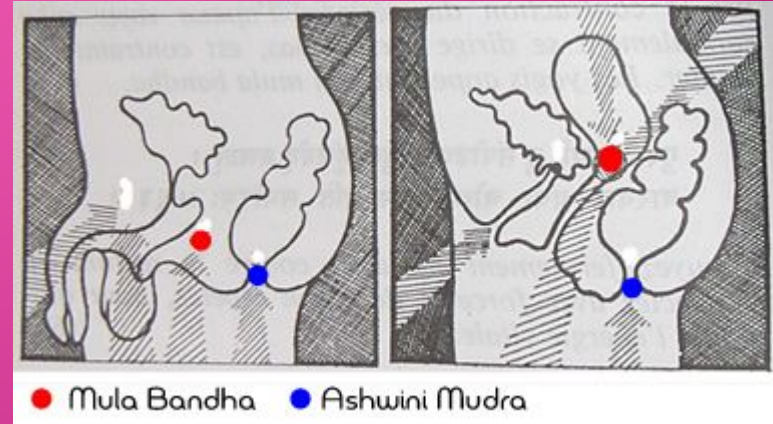
*Louise*  
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# MULA BANDHA

**“Iyengar defines Mūla Bandha as "A posture where the body from the anus to the navel is contracted and lifted up and towards the spine. This is qualified in that the actual muscle contracted is not the sphincter muscle, nor the muscle which cessates urination, but the muscle equidistant between the two.”**

## ANATOMY OF THE MULA BANDHA-

The root referred to here is the root of the spine, the pelvic floor or, more precisely, the centre of the pelvic floor, the perineum. The perineum is the muscular body between the anus and the genitals. By slightly contracting the pubo-coccygeal (PC) muscle, which goes from the pubic bone to the tail bone (coccyx), we create an energetic seal that locks *prana* into the body and so prevents it from leaking out at the base of the spine. *Mula Bandha* is said to move *prana* into the central channel, called *sushumna*, which is the subtle equivalent of the spine



# MULA BANDHA: ROOT LOCK ACTIVATION

## How to:

- Become comfortable away from distractions. (Set a timer for five minutes.)
- Take one deep breath to the count of five. While breathing in, gently lift and hold your pelvic floor muscles up and in. connect the hold a little higher with each count (like rising one floor at a time on an imaginary elevator.)
- Count 1: As you connect to your breath, lift the pelvic floor
- Count 2: Each inhale, lift the pelvic floor a bit higher.
- Count 3: Continue breathing in and lift to the third floor of your imaginary elevator.
- Count 4: Continue breathing in and lift the pelvic floor up another level.
- Count 5: Complete your inhale deep into the lower lobes of your lungs while lifting the pelvic floor muscles to its highest position.
- Breathe out to the count of five. With each count from one to five, release your pelvic floor just a bit (like going down a floor of an elevator with each count) until your pelvic floor is back at its regular position by the count of five at which time you will have completely exhaled.
- Repeat for five minutes twice a day. (It only takes five minutes. Longer isn't better. However frequency and consistency does matter.)



## UDIYANNA BANDHA

UDDIYANA MEANS TO FLY

UPWARD, RISE UP

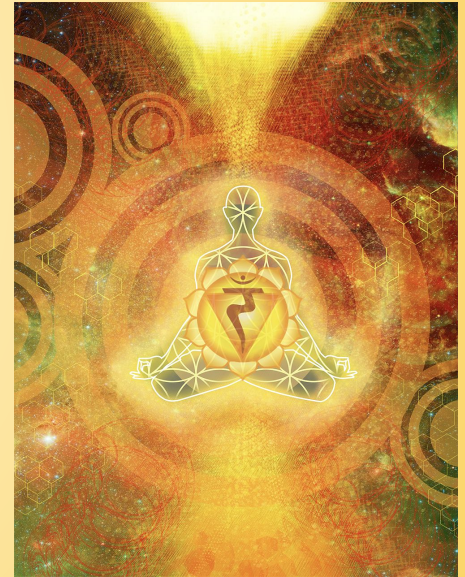
CORE LOCK

# UDIYANNA BANDHA

- Uddiyana Bandha
- Location: abdomen
- Uses: Provides structural support for the torso
- Stimulates your digestive juices, thus increasing your metabolism
- tones your overworked abdominal organs,
- balances the adrenal system through the abdominal contractions ,relieves stress, lethargy and tension
- relieves indigestion
- Supports Arm balances, inversions, transitions, balances and energetic cleansing
- Strengthens the digestive fire
- Tones the body's energetic core.

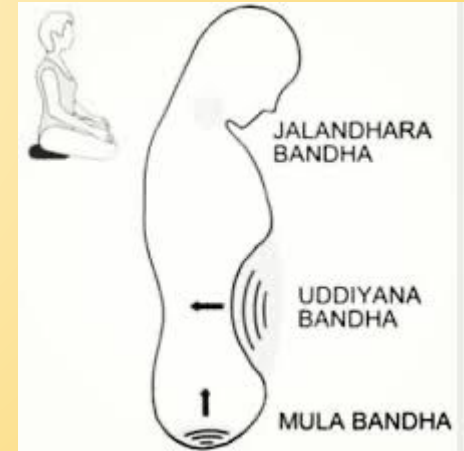
Chakra Connection: Solar Plexus

Uddiyana Bandha is contraindicated in high blood pressure, heart disease, glaucoma, and pregnancy



# UDDIYANNA BANDHA

- How to: Draw the abdomen backwards and upward toward the spine.
- To find Uddiyana Bandha start standing up tall.
- Inhale through your nose and reach your arms up overhead.
- Exhale out of your mouth and fold forward placing your hands just above your knees.
- Without inhaling, straighten your elbows, and pull your abdominal wall and organs up and back towards your spine.
- Retain for as long as possible, and exit the bandha via inhaling through your nose and standing up straight, raising your arms up, then exhaling through your nose again as you move your arms down.
- If you are doing it correctly and happen to glance at your profile in a mirror, you should see your waist inward, with the ribs noticeably protruding over and in front of your abdomen or belly button.





## JALANDHARA BANDHA

JALANDHARA BANDHA: THROAT LOCK

. JALA MEAN THROAT, DHARAN

MEANS STREAM

LOCATED AT THE THROAT

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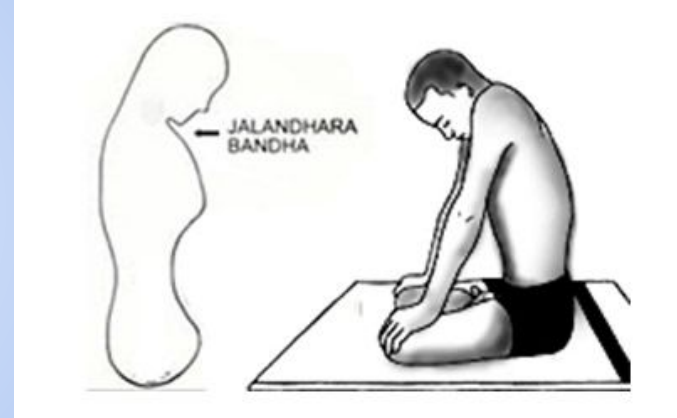
# JALANDHARA BANDHA

- Uses:
  - Connects mind, body, breath and is said to be the most assured way for establishing balance and union between mind and body.
  - Controls the flow of energy in the nerves and blood vessels of the upper back, neck and head,
  - Benefits the vocal cords
  - Works the spinal cord,
  - Enhances the circulatory and respiratory systems, Stimulates the thyroid to balance metabolism .
  - When practiced with breathing, slows down the heart beat, respiratory rate, body temperature and regulates energetic body systems
  - calms the mind
  - ncreases ability to focus
  - During inversions it prevents excessive energy moving into the head.



# JALANDHARA BANDHA

- How to:
  - To connect Jalandhara Bandha sit up tall, either in a comfortable cross legged position or on your shins with your sit bones on your heels.
  - Place the palm of your hands on your knees.
  - Inhale slowly and deeply through your nose, then bring your chin towards your neck and lift your sternum ever so slightly.
  - Press down on your hands and straighten your elbows, pull your chin back further, and retain as long as possible.
  - To exit lift your chin, inhale the remainder of capacity into your lungs, and exhale.
  - Also activated in Bridge Pose, shoulder stand, Oujai breath



# MAHA BANDHA

Maha Bandha: Maha in Sanskrit means great

- Maha Bandha is the combination of all three aforementioned bandhas.
- Maha Bandha gives the benefits of all three bandhas: strengthens the autonomic, nervous system, pelvic region, tones abdominal region, and regulates the entire endocrine system.

To connect with the Maha Bandha sit in a comfortable seat, on your shins or cross legged, palms of the hands on the thighs or knees.

- May want to utilize gyan mudra for concentration & intention.
- Inhale fully through your nose, and exhale completely through your nose.
- Squeeze, squeeze, squeeze until every last drop is out.
- Drop your chin, lift your chest, and from there engage Jalandhara Bandha.
- Without inhaling engage Mula Bandha,
- Then find Uddiyana Bandha.
- Retain, pressing your palms down, as long as possible.
- When you have had enough, release all the bandhas starting with Mula bandha working upward while fully inhaling.

# HASTA BANDHA

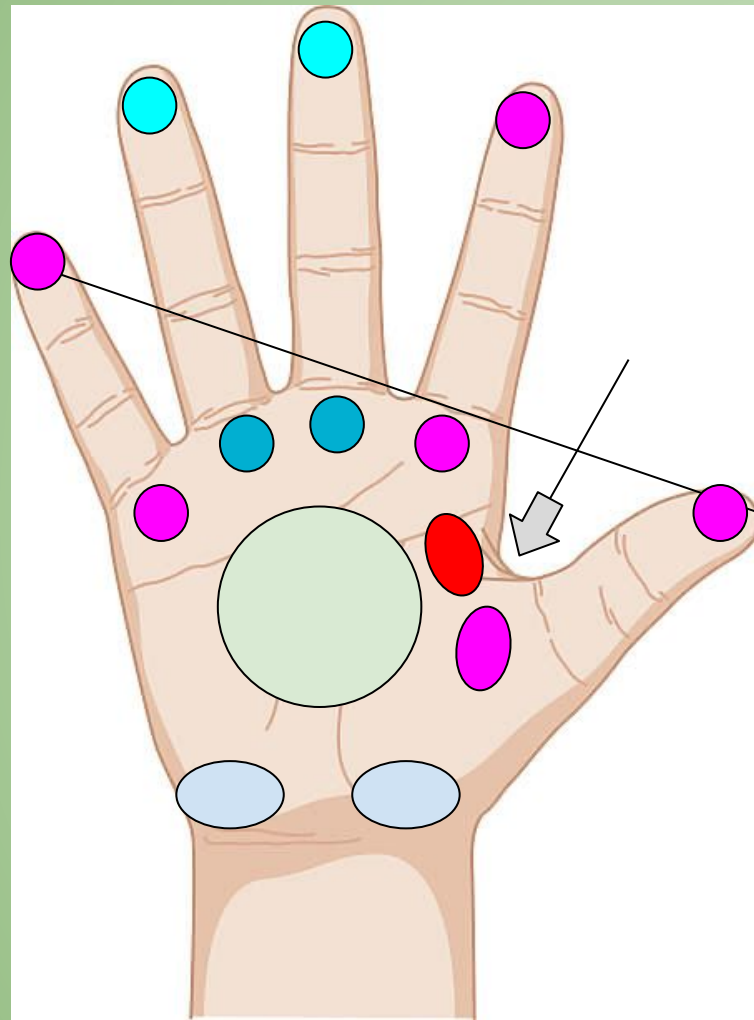
Hasta Bandha: Hand lock -

- The practice of hasta bandha allows setting up of hands to take on the weight of the body in a safe way, protecting the wrist from pain or injury.
- The action of hasta bandha is to root down through the pads and mounds of the thumb and fingers, and energetically draw/suction upwards through the center of the palms, creating a lift upwards through the hands, wrists and lower arms.”

ENGAGING THE HANDS IN HASTA BANDHA:

- On hands & Knees, begin with your arms shoulder width apart
- Position the wrists so that the middle and index fingers are parallel with the mat.
- Spread your fingers apart gently, creating space between them.
- Particularly the index and thumb, you want to create an ‘L’ shape.
- Emphasize pressing the index and thumb pads into the mat; it will help to spread the weight over a greater area of the hand.

# HASTA BANDHA



Energetic lines



Active connection- firm active engagement



Active connection- balance points



Active connection- connective press



Passive connection- little pressure



Do not lift from ground



Suction to grounded source

# PADA BANDHA

Pada Bandha: Foot Lock

The purpose of pada bandha is to activate the arches which support elevation in the knees, thus providing a firm foundation in standing poses.

## **Your Foot Foundation**

The foot itself is made up of 26 bones (major bones) all inter-relating & articulating against one another in a complex structure in such a way that we stay balanced. The foot is our foundation because it meets with the ground which generally doesn't change, particularly in our yoga practice. We build our foundation on the ground-if the foundation isn't right everything above has the potential to go awry.

The foundation is built on three arches. Certainly, we're almost all familiar with the one on the inside (medial side) of the foot which teachers are constantly telling us to engage, but there are also two others. One of these is found on the outside of the foot although it's not quite as prominent. The third arch runs across the base of the toes. Do you ever notice that your foot gets wider when you stand on it? This is the reason you measure your foot when standing. It's because your foot gets slightly longer along the lines of the first two arches mentioned and wider along the third.

Essentially, we're standing on a triangle with one point at the base of the big toe, one at the base of the little toe & one at our heel. Connect these three points together & you get a triangle. Take these three points & connect them to the top of the ankle joint & now we've created a pyramid & that, my friends, is a very stable structure to be standing on.

## PADA BANDHA

The arches have three elements: the bone shape, the ligamentous and fascial connections, and the third is the musculature in the front, back and sides of the calf. All these together maintain the arches and create a foot foundation.

There are two rather important muscles surrounding the foot that are intimately tied into the arch on the medial side. They wrap around the foot like the stirrup you would get into on a horse. In fact, they're referred to as the "anatomical stirrup". The two muscles are the tibialis anterior & the peroneus longus. The first of these two is the same muscle associated with shin splints and can be palpated quite easily. Find your shin bone (tibia) and move your finger over to the outside (lateral side) of the bone. Now, lift your foot from the ankle joint and you'll feel the muscle beneath your fingers. You can also follow the muscle down and find a very thick tendon heading to the inside of your foot, right to the medial arch.

The second muscle is harder to find. It runs down the outside of your calf behind the bump on the outside (lateral side) of your ankle, then under your foot from the lateral side, and finally heads across the bottom of your foot to meet up with tibialis anterior on the medial arch. These two muscles together become balancers of the foot and affect the way your arch is either drawn up or falling when standing. There are a myriad of muscles assisting in the arches.

# PADA BANDHA

**There are a myriad of muscles assisting in the arches:**

**Medial Arch** (running from the base of the big toe to the heel) Muscles: fibularis longus, tibialis posterior (most powerful of all deep leg muscles-key stabilizing muscle of the lower leg, handles inversion and flexion of foot) & and flexor hallucis longus (attaches to the plantar surface of the big toe. All three muscles are innervated by the tibial nerve which comprises half of the sciatic nerve.

**Lateral Arch** (running from the base of the pinky toe to the heel) Muscles: fibularis longus (bends foot outward and flexes ankle), fibularis brevis (moves both upper & lower ankle joint, and abductor digiti minimi (moves the little toe)-. This arch is designed to transmit force when walking or being mobile.

**Transverse Arch** (running horizontally along the base of the toes) Muscles: adductor hallucis (flexing & contracting the big toe).

# PADA BANDHA

## **The Big Toe in Ayurvedic Medicine**

In Ayurvedic & Yogic texts we know that prana flows through energy pathways called Nadis. We also have 108 marma (acupressure points) as well.

In the lower body there are six points beginning or ending in the foot & running through the legs-spleen, kidney, liver, stomach, bladder & gallbladder. When a Nadi gets blocked prana cannot flow, stagnation occurs, and the health of the organ and the human is compromised. Just as adversely, prana can be flowing too fast through a point and this also effects the health of the organ.

The 3 points to remember when it comes to the big toes are the liver & spleen located on the inside of the big toe & the kidney point located on the plantar surface of the big toe. Kidney governs our life force.

The foot is like our energetic epicenter, the first and last place energy enters and leaves our body. Although, the foot chakra is actually split with half in the ball of each foot...when we bring the balls of our feet together, we make that energy whole.

BALANCE AND STABILIZATION

MUSCULAR ENERGY

ENERGETIC ALIGNMENT

INNER SPIRAL

BALANCE AND SUPPORT

OUTER SPIRAL

ACTIVE AND LIFTED ARCH

ORGANIC ENERGY

