

What are the 7 Chakras and How Can You Unblock Them?

The crown of your head, your throat, and your heart are just a few of the energy centers in your body.

If you've ever taken a yoga or meditation class, had an energy healing session like reiki, or just watched online videos about those subjects, you've probably heard about chakras and the role they play in the flow of energy in your body. You may have also learned that it's important to keep your chakras open or unblocked.

What exactly are chakras and how do they affect your physical and emotional well-being?

Let's take a closer look at your main chakras and the impact these energy centers may have on your mind and body, plus how to keep them open to promote physical, mental, and emotional well-being.

What are chakras?

In Sanskrit, the word *chakra* means *disk* or *wheel* and refers to the energy centers in your body. These wheels or disks of spinning energy each correspond to certain nerve bundles and major organs. To function at their best, your chakras need to stay open, or balanced. If they get blocked, you may experience physical or emotional symptoms related to a particular chakra.

The seven main chakras run along your spine. They start at the root, or base of your spine and extend to the crown of your head. Some people believe you have many more, but let's look at the main ones here.

What are the 7 main chakras?

The seven major chakras, each in a specific location along your spine are: root, sacral, solar plexus, heart, throat, third eye and crown.

Root chakra

The root chakra, or Muladhara, is located at the base of your spine. It provides you with a base or foundation for life, and it helps you feel grounded and able to withstand challenges. Your root chakra is responsible for your sense of security and stability.

Sacral chakra

The sacral chakra, or Svadhisthana, is located just below your belly button. This chakra is responsible for your sexual and creative energy. It's also linked to how you relate to your emotions as well as the emotions of others.

Solar plexus chakra

The solar plexus chakra, or Manipura, is located in your stomach area. It's responsible for confidence and self-esteem, as well as helping you feel in control of your life.

Heart chakra

The heart chakra, or Anahata, is located near your heart, in the center of your chest. It comes as no surprise that the heart chakra is all about our ability to love and show compassion.

Throat chakra

The throat chakra, or Vishuddha, is located in your throat. This chakra has to do with our ability to communicate verbally.

Third eye chakra

The third eye chakra, or Ajna, is located between your eyes. You can thank this chakra for a strong gut instinct, because the third eye is responsible for intuition. It's also linked to imagination.

Crown chakra

The crown chakra, or Sahasrara, is located at the top of your head. Your Sahasrara represents your spiritual connection to yourself, others, and the universe. It also plays a role in your life's purpose.

What does it mean if a chakra is blocked or unbalanced?

Diane Malaspina, PhD, a yoga medicine therapeutic specialist, says she prefers to think of chakras as out of balance versus blocked.

"There can be a depletion of energy flow or too much energetic activity in a chakra — each will manifest into different outcomes," she explained. When a chakra is low in energy, she said, you'll have difficulty expressing the qualities associated with that chakra.

When a chakra is overactive, Malaspina said, the qualities are a dominant force in the person's life. This can have both physical and emotional effects. For example, the first chakra is about security, survival, and the foundation of our life. If it's underactive, Malaspina said, it can show up as depression and insecurity. If there's too much energy, it can show up as fearlessness without precaution or hoarding because you need more to feel secure.

Can a blocked chakra affect your health?

In general, the location of the chakra that's out of balance may affect the parts of your body in close proximity to that chakra, according to Malaspina. This includes your organs, bones, joints, and tissues near that area. Psychologically, she says, imbalances in the chakras may cause an emotional imbalance. This may lead to increased anger, sadness, fear, or indecisiveness.

"It's important to pay attention to both the psychological and physiological sensations because they can inform each other and uncover the root cause of the experience," said certified yoga teacher and master reiki healer, Guadalupe Terrones.

According to Terrones, experiencing too much stress — physically or mentally — may cause one or more chakras to be out of balance. "Personal habits such as poor physical alignment or posture, eating unhealthy food, or self-destructive behavior may cause a chakra to be imbalanced," she said. Terrones also said that prolonged imbalance may lead to physical disease and illness, musculoskeletal issues, and mental health challenges like depression or anxiety.

How can you unblock a chakra?

According to Malaspina, a great way to promote balance in a chakra is to create alignment in your physical body through:

- yoga postures
- breathing practices to encourage the flow of energy
- meditation to bring about clarity of mind

Each chakra has yoga poses that may help fine-tune its energy. Here are some poses that may help unblock each of your seven chakras.



Root chakra

The root chakra is the base chakra and reflects your foundation. According to Terrones, any balancing poses, like Mountain (shown here), Tree or Warrior, are great for establishing a stronger relationship with your body's foundation.

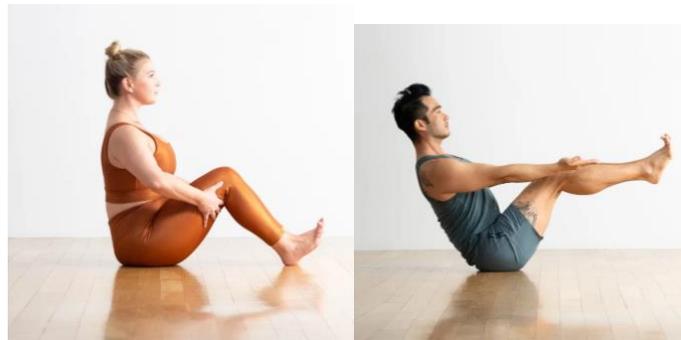
Sacral chakra

The sacral chakra is associated with our reproductive area and is responsible for our creativity and sensuality. Terrones says poses that strengthen your pelvic floor, where the sacral chakra resides, such as Bridge Pose or deep hip openers like Pigeon Pose (shown here in a modified form for beginners) or Lizard Pose, are great for strengthening your sacral chakra.



Solar plexus chakra

The solar plexus chakra is all about your inner fire and resides around your core. That's why Terrones says core strengthening poses, such as Boat (beginner versions shown below) or Triangle, are great for firing up your abs and creating more balance in this chakra.



Heart chakra

Your heart chakra, according to Terrones, is the integration point between the lower chakras and the higher chakras. "It reflects our ability to open ourselves up to deeper connections with others," she said. To unblock this chakra, she recommends heart openers, such as Camel Pose. She also recommends Cow Face Pose which help open your chest, shoulders, and arms so you can more fully embrace others.



Camel pose



Cow face pose

Throat chakra

The throat chakra is your communication center. According to Terrones, Plow and Fish are great poses to open up your throat chakra. Both help open up the back and front sides of your neck, where the throat chakra resides.



Fish pose

Third eye chakra

The third eye chakra rules your ability to invite a new reality into your life by dreaming up different possibilities. Terrones recommends poses that involve getting your upper body intimately connected with your lower body. According to Terrones, poses such as Forward Fold are great for the third eye. “In these poses, our higher self, represented by our upper bodies, establishes a connection with our more rooted parts of our bodies, our legs, so that we can manifest a dream into a physical reality.”



Crown chakra

The crown chakra rules your connection to your higher self. That’s why Terrones recommends the pose that comes after all yoga poses: Savasana, or Corpse Pose. This pose, says Terrones, helps strengthen your crown chakra by connecting you with your eternal self — your soul — and reminding you where you came from and where you’ll go.



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