

Care and Cure: Power of Yoga

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Abstract: *Yoga, the ancient body mind and spirit practice, has been known mainly for the benefits of this system's exercises. But for thousands of years, since the Ancients themselves explored and developed Yoga, it has been used as a deeply healing process. A systematic process which not only helps us to stay strong and vital, keeps stress at bay but which can also prevent disease and promote rapid healing and all this, where modern medicine can often cause more side effects rather than actually healing illness and disease.*

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1. Introduction

Yoga first emerged in the Indian civilization, and has since been gaining popularity around the world. The word 'yoga' is derived from the Sanskrit word, *yuj* which means 'to join'. While your workout at the gym may focus on physical activity, weight control, or strengthening of the body, it definitely ignores the mind. It is yoga's ability to connect the mind and the body together that helps it to positively enhance human well-being. Yoga lead to one basic fundamental truth – that your mind and body are two sides of the same coin and they must be kept healthy in a consistent manner. Its primary focus has never been weight loss, although that is a wonderful and definite outcome! Yoga aims to cleanse your breathing, your posture, your thoughts, and your diet in order to achieve a healthier life. Today, when almost everyone is suffering from some form of ailment or the other, yoga is an effective way to deal with your problems. Yogic meditation allows the mind and body to slow down, controls the heart rate and breathing, and relaxes the mind. Balance is an important element of yoga. Yoga exercises allow you to shift weight to different organs of your body, allowing oxygenated blood to enter these organs and flush out the toxins. Yoga postures push your muscles to hold their stances, and strengthen their core. There are three systems that help in elimination of waste from the body – circulatory, digestive and lymphatic – and the stretching and breathing exercises of yoga work at all three levels. Various poses in yoga help in improving bowel movements and several yoga exercises drain the lymph nodes of toxins. While yoga by itself can alleviate a number of problems, it is particularly effective as a complement to other forms of health care, both alternative and conventional. Studies suggest, for example, that yoga therapy can lessen the side effects of chemotherapy and radiation treatments for people with cancer and facilitate faster recovery after bypass surgery. In clinical trials, many patients with asthma, type II diabetes (formerly known as adult-onset diabetes), or high blood pressure who began a regular practice of yoga were able to either lower their drug dosage, or eliminate some pills entirely. Less medication means fewer side effects, and, sometimes, very substantial cost savings. Therapeutic yoga is an inherently holistic approach,

simultaneously working on the body, mind, and spirit. Various yoga practices systematically strengthen different systems in the body, including the heart and cardiovascular system, the lungs, muscles, and the nervous system. Yoga practices can improve function of the digestive system, foster psychological well-being, and improve oxygen delivery to tissues. Yoga also can help the body more efficiently remove waste products, carcinogens, and cellular toxins. Most people in the West live stressful lives, and yoga—and by extension yoga therapy—is perhaps the best overall stress reduction system ever invented. Stress has been linked to a wide variety of medical problems, from migraine headaches and irritable bowel syndrome to potentially life-threatening conditions such as diabetes, osteoporosis, and heart disease. Since persistently high levels of stress hormones, particularly cortisol, can undermine function of the immune system, here too yoga can help. We understand today that most disease is caused by three things: nutrition or malnutrition, elimination (or lack of) and toxicity, and of course, stress. And Yoga has teaching, education or guidance to alleviate and counter all of these negatives of modern life. Teach person self-control, give them positive guidance, and let them feel the amazing benefits of wellbeing and you give a person health and vitality for life – to enjoy life as we're supposed to, to our full potential. s Yoga can cure almost any disease under the sky. In fact it would be fair to say that you can stay free from all diseases if you practice yoga asanas regularly. And if you have developed a particular disease, the natural cure for that ailment might be there in yoga. After all, yoga is the collective wisdom of ages and encompasses a system of cure without modern medicines. Yoga can cure many chronic diseases like asthma and arthritis if it is practiced regularly. Yoga cannot cure diabetes but it is effective in controlling the blood sugar to a normal level. There are various yoga asanas that are natural cures for lower back pain and indigestion. The splitting headaches that are symptoms of migraine can be easily cured through yoga. So yoga can cure a number of severe health problems. If you don't like popping pills for everything, then try the alternative natural cure. Here are some serious illnesses that can be cured by yoga.

2. Heart Disease

Several trials have found that yoga can lower blood pressure, cholesterol, and resting heart rates, and help slow the progression of atherosclerosis—all risk factors for heart disease, says Erin Olivo, PhD, director of Columbia University's Integrative Medicine Program. While almost any exercise is good for the heart, experts speculate yoga's meditative component may give it an extra boost by helping to stabilize the endothelium, the lining of the blood vessels that, when irritated, contributes to cardiovascular disease. Since the lining is reactive to stress, and meditation can lower stress hormones, yoga may be causing a cascade of events that could reduce your risk of a heart attack or stroke. The overall benefits of yoga on risk factors for heart disease were evaluated by researchers at Bhabha Atomic Research Centre, Medical Division, in Mumbai, India. (Mumbai is the new name for the city formerly known as Bombay. The name was changed in the mid 1990s. The effect of yoga on the body, psychological well being, and cardiovascular risk factors was studied in a group of middle aged patients. Twenty patients (16 males, 4 females) in the age group of 35 to 55 years with mild to moderate high blood pressure underwent yogic practices daily for one hour for three months. High blood pressure is a risk factor for heart disease, stroke, and kidney damage. Biochemical and psychological parameters were studied prior and following period of three months of yoga. These biochemical parameters included blood sugar, lipid profile including cholesterol, and blood levels of catecholamines (stress chemicals like epinephrine or adrenaline). The overall results were quite positive. There was a decrease in blood pressure along with a decrease in blood sugar, cholesterol and triglycerides. The patients also reported an improvement in overall well being and quality of life. There was also a decrease in the levels of catecholamines, suggesting a decrease in sympathetic activity. A decrease in sympathetic activity indicates that the patients were calmer and experienced less tension and stress, and that their blood pressure would be lower. The authors of the study conclude that yoga can play an important role in decreasing the risk factors for cardiovascular disease in those with mild to moderate hypertension.

3. Cancer

Yoga Benefits for Cancer Patients Yoga's gentle exercises have numerous well-known health benefits. Practicing yoga can lower blood pressure, improve coordination and reduce stress. For those coping with a chronic illness such as mesothelioma or other types of cancers, a yoga routine can be added to a treatment regimen, whether it is holistic or traditional treatment. Like any treatment, yoga should be individualized to meet specific needs. Unsurprisingly, cancer patients often do not have enough energy and do not feel well enough for much physical activity. Especially during treatments such as chemotherapy, even simple tasks like making dinner can become daunting chores. Cancer patients often suffer from fatigue and muscle soreness, as well as

various other ailments like shortness of breath caused by mesothelioma of the lung. These problems often can be relieved by implementing a gentle yoga routine. For patients who may have trouble integrating physical activity into their lives during treatment, yoga stretches and poses provide a low-impact, low-stress technique for rejuvenating and reenergizing the body. A patient should incorporate yoga in whatever way works best for his or her schedule and body. Some cancer patients find that a weekly 30- to 60-minute yoga session is enough to improve physical wellbeing and reduce stress. Others benefit from a daily or twice-daily practice. A short 10-minute session in the morning and another before bed can have significant physical results without imposing on a busy schedule. As with any such lifestyle change, a new yoga practice should be approved by cancer patients' doctors. Doctors can advise their patients with regards to each specific diagnosis and condition and may even be able to recommend a therapeutic yoga instructor. In addition to communicating with their doctors, patients should tell their yoga instructors of the special circumstances and any other relevant physical problems.

4. Depression

Low brain levels of the neurotransmitter GABA are often found in people with depression; SSRIs, electroconvulsive therapy, and now yoga, it seems, can boost GABA. Preliminary research out of the Boston University School of Medicine and Harvard's McLean Hospital found that healthy subjects who practiced yoga for one hour had a 27 percent increase in levels of GABA compared with a control group that simply sat and read for an hour. This supports a growing body of research that's proving yoga can significantly improve mood and reduce the symptoms of depression and anxiety.

5. Diabetes

Certain yoga asanas, if practiced regularly, are known to have beneficial effects on human body. Researchers at the University College of Medical Sciences, in Shahdara, New Delhi evaluated 24 patients aged 30 to 60 year old who had non-insulin dependent diabetes mellitus, also called Type II diabetes. Diabetics who require insulin are called Type I, while Type II diabetics are treated with diet, exercise, and oral medicines that lower blood sugar. The researchers evaluated the baseline fasting blood sugar levels of the patients, and they also performed pulmonary function studies. These pulmonary function studies measure lung capacity and the amount of air that can be exhaled within the first second of a rapid exhale. After performing these basic tests, yoga experts gave these patients training in yoga asanas. The yoga practice was done 40 minutes a day for 40 days. These asanas consisted of 13 well known and common postures, done in a sequence. After 40 days of yoga asanas regimen, the testing was repeated. The results indicate that there was significant decrease in fasting blood sugar levels from about 190 initially to 140 after the 40 day period of yoga activity. Fasting blood sugar in people

without diabetes is usually below 120. The lung studies showed an average improvement of about 10 percent in lung capacity. These findings suggest that better blood sugar control and pulmonary functions can be obtained in type I diabetics when they stick to a daily schedule of yoga asanas and pranayama. The exact mechanism as to how these postures and controlled breathing interact with physio-neuro-endocrine mechanisms affecting blood sugar and pulmonary functions remains to be worked out.

6. Obesity

Yoga has an important role to play in the treatment of Obesity. Yoga techniques affect body, internal organs, endocrine glands, brain, mind and other factors concerning Body – Mind complex. Various Yoga techniques can be practiced effectively to reduce the weight and achieve normal healthy condition of Body and Mind. Yoga positions or postures are especially useful to reduce the fats in various parts, especially forward bending, twisting and backward bending asanas help reduce the fats near abdomen, hips and other areas. Also the practice of asanas improves functioning of internal organs, strengthening heart, lungs, kidneys, excretory & reproductive organs. Regular practice builds strength in muscles. Any physical activity will improve mobility and general health. Doing yoga decreases stress, improves flexibility and increases muscle tone and strength. The obese people often have trouble with joint pain; yoga can help by improving the body's alignment to reduce strain on joints by allowing the frame to bear more of the body's weight. Yoga also develops your balance, which helps you feel grounded and reduces the likelihood of injuring yourself in a fall. People who are overweight often feel disconnected from their bodies - yoga helps to bring the mind-body connection to the fore, which can improve self-image and acceptance of your body. Most importantly, yoga can help you feel better, both improving your physical fitness and elevating your mood. Yoga has considered all aspects of Obesity like physical, emotional and mental. Regular practice of Yoga and Yoga has different effect on obesity, which is permanent in nature than other techniques for obesity reduction.

7. Asthma

Studies conducted at yoga institutions in India have reported impressive success in improving asthma. It has also been proved that asthma attacks can usually be prevented by yoga methods without resorting to drugs. Physicians have also found improved concentration abilities and yoga meditation together with the practice of simple postures and breath control makes treatment more effective. Yoga practice also results in greater reduction in anxiety than drug therapy. Doctors believe that yoga practice helps patients by enabling them to gain access to their own internal experience and increased self-awareness. A type of meditation based on yoga eases asthma for some. Simple relaxation techniques and exercise can help regulate breathing patterns and also improve lung function. As a result,

some asthmatics may find yoga helps them to manage their condition by easing symptoms.

8. Conclusion

Yoga is an ancient art of meditation in India. It is considered that a regular practice of Yoga is very beneficial for achieving healthy body and sound mind. Yoga is also quoted to be very beneficial in the treatment of various ailments. Ayurvedic practitioners in India also suggest yoga as a part of their medical treatment. Yoga helps in enhancing your health and sense of well-being. There are several asana suggested in Yoga that actively works upon your body to help you achieve a perfect balance between your body requirements and energy produced. By balancing the hormonal production and organ functioning, yoga helps in healing several diseases.

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