

Importance of Yoga for Female Health

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Abstract

Acharya Sushrut says if a person's *Dosha*, *Dhatu*, *Agni*, *Mala* are in equilibrium state and his *Atma*, *Indriya*, *Mana* all are in a pleasant state, a person is healthy. This is the complete concept of health. Many *Acharya* considers that *Moksha* is the extreme level of being healthy. *Ayurveda* tells the *Naishthiki Chikitsa* for achieving this extreme level. *Yogshastra* aims for the same as the *Charaka* says that "Yoge Moksh Pravartakah". The Yoga is 'to combine' / 'to join' / 'to yoke' and it may be the combination of physical, mental, intellectual and spiritual aspects of a human being or the meeting of *Jeevatma* with *Paramatma*. According to the *Upanishad*, *Yoga* is the extreme level related to quieting of all the flatulations from the consciousness and control over the senses.

Yoga is essentially a spiritual discipline based on an extremely subtle science, which focuses on bringing harmony between mind and body. Now these days women handle many pressures regarding personal, professional and social life, so because of this pressure and busy schedule she can't focus well on her own health and ultimately faces the serious health issues like heart diseases, breast cancer, PCOD, depression, osteoporosis etc. Because of the unhealthy lifestyle the women faces multiple complications during her delivery. There is much effective Yoga that can save the women from all the sufferings. This paper is going to highlight some Yoga that is beneficial for aiming the healthy women, for normal delivery and for the recovery from some health issues.

Keywords: Delivery; *Jeevatma*; *Moksha*; Yoga.

INTRODUCTION

If a person is physically, mentally, spiritually, Intellectually and socially happy, only he can be said healthy.

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A lot of changes happen inside a woman's body throughout her life. Right from the age of 12 till after the menopause, her body goes through massive anatomical and physiological changes. These changes are not just on the gross body level, but also at hormonal level and hormonal balance depends on the state of mind. For this constant change, there has to be a consistent routine to keep the entire body healthy and fit. This consistent routine must go beyond the musculo skeletal requirements, aesthetics and take the body as well as mind into consideration for maintaining optimum health. This can be achieved through the regular practice of Yoga.

Yoga has been healing people for generations. Originating in the Indian subcontinent, it has

provided physical, mental and spiritual support to humans. Throughout these years and eras, the Yogic science has served people from all age groups and genders equally. However, there are some exercises that are of immense benefits for women. According to the Yogic philosophy in the particular women is the manifestation of goddess *Durga*, and they are the source of life on the planet and the union of all kinds of energy. A woman advances through multiple phases of life, from childhood to puberty and from motherhood to menopause. *Yoga* helps to deal with all these phases, changes and challenges coming into life. Many *Yoga* poses are given below that every woman should practice for maintaining the better health and mental energy.

YOGA FOR A WOMEN THAT KEEPS HER IN A HEALTHY STATE

Candlestick at the wall (Vipritkarni)

- The regular practice of this for 3 to 5 minutes opens the chest and relaxes the shoulders and belly.
- Improving the circulation of lymphatic fluid thus decreasing the leg swelling.
- Stimulating organs of the abdomen and getting rid of tiredness.
- It helps to relieve menstrual pain from the legs, feet, and pelvic muscles and is effective for polycystic ovarian disorder (PCOD).

Hero Pose (Virasana)

- 1 minute practice of Virasana causes stretching the hip muscles and the muscles between the legs can relieve period pain and improve the mobility of the hip joints.
- Relaxes and refreshes tired legs
- Stretches thighs, knees and ankles.
- Improves posture and strengthens back muscles.

Downward facing hero poses (Adho Mukh Virasana)

- 1 minute of this pose is relaxing for the lower back and the neck and stimulating blood circulation in the small pelvis area.

Dancer's pose (Natrajasana)

- 30 to 40 seconds for each leg improves posture, kidney function.
- Gives strength to the chest, ankles, hips, and legs.

- This asana increases the metabolism and helps in weight loss.
- It gives the groin, abdominal organs, and thighs a good stretch.

Shoulder Bridge (Setubandhasana)

- 1 minute practice of this eliminates back pain.
- Makes the abs stronger and preventing painful periods.
- Decreases the amount of fat around the waist.
- Stretches the chest, neck, spine, and hips.
- Strengthens the back, buttocks, and hamstrings.
- Helps relieve symptoms of menopause.

Tree Pose (Vrikshasana)

- The hips are opened out in Vrikshasana, which promotes flexibility and strength in that area. Because of the weight-bearing nature of the posture, the bones and the muscles of the hips and pelvic region are strengthened, thus preventing the hip osteoporosis.
- The frequent Vrikshasana practice help ease the symptoms like the crippling discomfort due to sciatica and heal the pain to a large extent.
- It aids in the stabilisation of the neurological system as it improves the neuromuscular coordination, allowing it to perform at its best. Apart from enhancing mental performance, Vrikshasana is also beneficial for self-esteem and preventing melancholy and mood swings.
- It is good for the uterus and ovarian health.

Boat Pose (Navasana)

- It is one of the best ways to elongate the thighs bones and spine.
- It relaxes the muscles and joints.
- Helps stretch the hamstrings and also helps to relieve tension.
- The kidneys, thyroid, and prostate glands, as well as the intestines, are all stimulated. Abdominal muscles are toned and strengthened.
- Improves the strength of spine and hip flexors.

Pigeon Pose (Kapotasana)

- This yogic exercise tones the abdominal muscles and nourishes the digestive organs.
- This pose focuses on opening the hips, which

supports mobility and flexibility in that joint.

- Pigeon Pose also stretches the hip flexors and lower back, which are commonly tight due to prolonged sitting. Stretching these muscles regularly may alleviate mild lower back or hip pain.
- It improves flexibility and elasticity of the arms, spine, thighs and calf muscles.
- It tones the muscles of the ribcage, abdomen and chest.
- It also tones the muscles of the throat and is helpful in the thyroid.
- The Asana also improves body posture.
- The Asana is also helpful in dealing with urinary problems.

Half Plough Pose (Ardhahalasana) and Plough Pose (Halasana)

- This is one of the best Asanas to strengthen the core muscles and back muscles.
- A strong core is more than just 6 pack abs, toned abdominal muscles are extremely important in women's health.
- This Asana also improves digestion and blood circulation, strengthens thigh and calf muscles.¹

YOGA POSTURES TO TACKLE IRREGULAR MENSES AND PRESERVE HORMONAL BALANCE

Fish Pose (Matsyasana):

- It causes a stretching on the thyroid and parathyroid glands, thereby improving their function.
- It stretches the intestines, liver, pancreas, bladder and other abdominal organs which improve their functioning and efficiency.
- Reduces blood supply to the legs and redirects it to the reproductive and pelvic organs. Stagnant blood around vertebral column is drained. Improves supply to brain and face, also stretches the carotid artery. The reproductive system is improved due to the increased blood supply.
- Toning of abdominal, thigh and intercostal muscles, toning of intercostal muscles help in deep breathing, so it is helpful in asthma and bronchitis. It also opens up the chest and lungs.

- Increases circulation to the back which helps in backache and cervical spondylitis. Boosts the immune system due to its effect on the thymus gland.

Bow Pose (Dhanurasana)

- Dhanurasana benefits the following muscles and hence can be included in yoga sequences with the corresponding muscles focus: Arms and Shoulders, Lower Back, Middle Back, Upper Back, Biceps and Triceps, Core (Abs), Gluteus, Hamstrings, Chest, Hips, Knees, Neck. Improves hip flexors.
- Bow pose opens up the hip flexors, which are often weak from underuse. Unlocking the hips can improve circulation, reduce lower back pain, and increase mobility in the area.

Downward Facing Dog Pose (Adho Mukha Shvanasana)

- This can encourage the regeneration of brain cells.
- Stretching the back of the hips, decreasing signs of cellulite.
- This asana is favorable for the female body and stimulates the flow of blood throughout the body parts.
- This pose helps increase blood flow to the head, which helps supply the nutrients to the hair and prevent from the baldness and greying of the hair.
- It also helps cure the varicose veins.

Garland Pose (Malasana)

- The Asana is good for relieving tension from the thigh and neck region.
- It also stretches the hips, groin, and ankles.

Camel Pose (Ushtrasana)

- It is beneficial in digestion, evacuation and for the reproductive system.
- It corrects the bended waist and also useful in the backache.²

Humming Bee Breathing Technique (Bhramari)

- This helps lower stress and highly effective in anger anxiety by quietening the excited emotional centers of the brain, so improves sleep.
- Eases menopausal syndrome, brings hormonal balance and reduces blood pressure and relieves migraine.

THE YOGA POSES FOR BOOSTING FERTILITY

Bhujangasana or Cobra Pose

- This position oxygenates and benefits the uterus and ovaries. However, it is not recommended in the first trimester.
- Bhujangasana is effective in the diseases related female reproductive system like leucorrhoea, dysmenorrhoea, irregular menstruation etc.³

Butterfly (Baddhkonasana) or Bhadrasana (Butterfly Pose)

- This Asana helps improve blood supply to the pelvis. The ligaments of reproductive organs get nourished well.
- This Asana offers a good stretch for the groins, knees, and inner thighs. It works towards improving flexibility in these regions and aids in smooth delivery if practiced regularly until late pregnancy.
- Bhadrasana improves the tone of pelvic and lower abdominal muscles. This relieves tension from the belly and the inside of the hips, increasing the mobility of the hip joints and stabilizing the menstrual cycle.⁴

Pashchimottanasana or the Seated Forward Bend

- This makes the waist and hip muscles healthy and reduces the excessive fat from abdominal area.
- Pashchimottanasana contracts the organs of lumbar region and makes them light so it is especially beneficial to the disease related to female reproductive organs.
- This helps in vitalizing the ovaries while reducing mental stress.⁵

Kapalbhati Pranayama

- The regular practice of this breathing technique enhances the quantity as well as the quality of reproductive cells in the body.
- Its consistent practice has also shown to remove cysts from ovaries and fibroids from the uterus.

Effective Yoga Poses during Pregnancy

- First Trimester Yoga Asanas:

The first trimester of pregnancy is when the developing foetus needs the most protection. Here are a few *Asanas* a mother to be women can safely do during this period:

Tadasana or the Mountain pose

- Tadasana is useful in the 1st and 2nd trimester.
- It helps in the correct development of spinal cord and relieves back pain.
- It boosts circulation, tone core muscles, and strengthen the back, hips, and legs.
- It eliminates energy blockages in pelvis and abdomen.
- This asana is useful for gynecological disorders and post-natal recovery.
- It helps to remove constipation.

Marjariasana or Cat Pose

- This pose is advisable only in the first trimester of the pregnancy and should be avoided after 26 weeks. The asana soothe menstrual cramps, stiffness and helps to manage irregular menstruation.
- It is a best practice for the female reproductive system. Marjariasana is beneficial in menstrual abnormalities and leucorrhea. It is very good for the spine as it stretches the backbone and strengthens it while also improving its flexibility.
- The movements in the asana massage the digestive organs and activate them. As a result, the process of digestion and metabolism is improved.
- Since the Asana requires a person to be on all their fours, it enhances blood circulation as well as oxygen flow through the body.

Uttanasana or Standing Forward Bend

- Forward bends are not usually advocated during pregnancy, but this one is an exception as it is very useful yoga pose for the pregnant women.
- Uttanasana provides the strength to the thighs, knees, ankles and uterus.
- Uttanasana helps improve posture by keeping the spine strong and flexible.
- It relieves back stiffness and Increases hip flexibility.
- Relieves tension in the spine, neck and back.
- It stretches the hips, hamstrings, and calves.
- It calms the mind and soothes the nerves.
- It activates the abdominal muscles and eases symptoms of menopause.
- It lowers the high blood pressure and therapeutic for infertility.

Nouka Sanchalana Asana

- It is a best practice for the pregnant women till the first three months. It is especially useful for gynecological disorders in females. Its practice is also useful in postnatal recovery.
- NoukaSanchalana massages all the abdominal organs and muscles.
- Nouka Sanchalana improves the energy flow within the body by breaking down neuro muscular knots like it eliminates energy blockages in the spine and makes it flexible.

Second Trimester Yoga Asanas

As the belly pops and weight increases in this trimester, a pregnant lady's movements may be limited, and she need to practice *Asanas* which do not put any strain on her belly. Here are a few *Asanas* she may safely perform in the second trimester.

MeruAksharshanasan

- This *Asana* helps in relaxing the abdominal muscles, inner thigh and hamstring muscles.
- It also stretches the muscles on the side of the body. As her baby grows and takes up more space, this asana helps her body accommodate easily.
- It improves flexibility of the hips.
- It Stimulates kidney function.

Uttanasan

- This *Asana* strengthens the muscles which are going to be strained as her weight increases, and also prepares her for delivery. The middle back, thighs and ankles and uterus are exercised here.
- It maintains the functions of liver, kidneys and spleen.
- It is beneficial in flexibility of the hips, gives Strengths to the knees and spine also.
- It improves the process of blood circulation.
- *Uttanasan* is useful for stretching the leg muscles like calves and hamstrings.
- It improves the functions of endocrine and nervous system.
- It eases tension in the back, shoulder, and neck and useful for toning and activating the muscles of the abdomen.

Vajrasana

- It obstructs blood flow to the legs and thighs and increases it in the stomach area, thus improving the bowel movements and

relieving constipation.

- Performing *Vajrasana* helps to strengthen the lower back muscles, thus providing relief from occasional pain and pain caused by sciatica.
- Performing *Vajrasana* helps to increase the flexibility of thigh and foot muscles and also the muscles around our hip, knees and ankles. This helps to relieve rheumatic pain in these areas due to stiffness.
- *Vajrasana* also helps in reducing heel pain caused due to calcaneal spurs and pain due to gout.
- It stimulates the abdominal organs like the pancreas and liver, thereby improving the body's ability to produce insulin in an optimal manner.
- Performing *Vajrasana* increases blood circulation in the pelvis and strengthens the pelvic floor muscles. It is thus useful for women suffering from stress urinary incontinence. It also helps to ease out labour pains and menstrual cramps.
- Performing breathing exercises in this pose helps to calm minds and benefit emotionally.

THIRD TRIMESTER YOGAASANAS

Pranayama

- It is an important part of third trimester practice, *Pranayama* helps relax and concentrate while focusing on rhythmic breathing.
- It reduces high blood pressure and Improves lung function.
- It Improves sleep quality and Increases mindfulness.

Utkatasana

- A combination of stretching and breathing, this asana prepares the women for contractions by helping her focus on the breathing.
- Exercises the spine, hips and chest muscles
- It helps to strengthen the lower back and torso, tones the thigh, ankle, leg and knee muscles.

Trikonasana or Triangle Pose

- This is a great asana to ease digestive troubles related to pregnancy and also improves the flexibility of the hips.
- It Increases stability, Stretches and lengthens the spine and opens the hips and shoulders.
- *Trikonasana* is a good Asana for growing girls.

Upvisht Konasana (Leg open pose)

- 1 minute, 8 to 10 times practice of this makes the back stronger, gets rid of spasms in the groin, and stimulates blood circulation in the pelvis, improving the function of the ovaries, regulating the menstrual cycle, and preventing cellulite.
- It stimulates the abdominal organs.
- This *Asana* helps relieve lower back pain and creates space around the pelvis, thus preparing the body for delivery by opening the hip joints and releasing the lumbar spine.⁶

Benefits of Prenatal Yoga

- Prenatal *Yoga* is good for the mother and the baby as it involves a multidimensional approach to exercise which includes stretching, focusing on the breathing and calming the mind. Here is a list of benefits that prenatal yoga provides.
- Reduces physical and emotional stress, Improves sleep, Reduces headaches, Decreases lower back pain and sciatic pain, Decreases nausea, Reduces risk of preterm labour, the chances of carpal tunnel syndrome or pain in the hand and fingers caused by nerve compression and intrauterine growth restriction, which is a condition that slows the baby's growth.
- Breathing exercises help prepare for the labour.
- Yoga boosts the strength, endurance and flexibility of the mother.

CONCLUSION

Because of the over workload the women don't take care of herself and catches the diseases early. Later if she take chemical loaded medicines for only the acute case, it becomes harmful her body. *Yoga* is the best and natural way to help her in this condition. These days' young girls have a lot of stress because of which the rhythm of their menstrual cycle gets disturbed. Periods coming too late, too early, over bleeding are all the signs of disturbed rhythm. These days PCOS (Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome) is a commonly seen pathological condition in young

girls, in which multiple cysts are formed inside the ovary. Hormonal imbalance, poor eating habits, stress are causative factors of PCOS.

For pregnant women maintaining enough oxygenation with growing foetus, tone of abdominal and back muscles for proper vertebral alignment, strong pelvic muscles for normal labor, healthy ligaments for normal position of internal organs and lowered stress hormones because that if the mother is in stress the foetus will be too these are all extremely important factors. Post pregnancy abdominal muscles strengthening are also very important along with plenty of rest, healthy diet and stress management. Although exercise is too much important but for a pregnant lady *Ayurveda* says '*Darun Vyayam Varjanam*' so the critical exercises are always avoidable for her.

After the age of 45, the onset of menopause is with irregular periods to the step by step cessation of menstruation. During menopause again the body suffers from hormone imbalance. So it's a need of today's era to consider *Yoga* as a part of daily routine. Healthcare expert's advice women to engage in not more than 2.5 – 5 hours of moderate intensity exercise every week, to preserve hormonal balance and regulate menstrual cycles.

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