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Yoga: Curative and preventive therapy

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Abstract

Yoga is a healing system of theory and practice. It is a combination of breathing exercises, physical postures, deep relaxation and meditation, practiced for more than 5,000 years. Yoga is considered a mind-body intervention that is used to reduce the health effects of generalized stress. Yoga acts both as a curative and preventive therapy. According to medical scientists, yoga therapy is successful because of the balance created in the nervous and endocrine systems which directly influences all the other systems and organs of the body. Laboratory tests have proved the yogi's increased abilities of consciously controlling autonomic or involuntary functions, such as temperature, heartbeat and blood pressure. Regular practice of asanas, pranayama, yoga nidra and meditation, can help such diverse ailments such as: acidity, allergies, anger, anxiety, arthritis, asthma, back pain, common cold, constipation, depression, diabetes, headaches, high blood pressure, hypertension, nervous tension, obesity, osteoporosis, slipped disk, stiffness, stress, thyroid problems.

Keywords: Yoga, Pranayama, Yog Nidra

Introduction

Yoga is a healing system of theory and practice. It is a combination of breathing exercises (pranayama), physical postures (asana), deep relaxation (yoga Nindra) and meditation (dyana), practiced for more than 5,000 years. While Yoga evolved as a religious practice in Hinduism, in the Western world has grown as a form of purely physiological, psychological, mental and spiritual practice. Most of the yoga practices in the yoga have little or nothing to do with Hinduism, but are simply a way of keeping all levels of the human being, fit and healthy and this is only a part of the broad view of yoga. Through the practice of yoga, we become aware of the interconnection between our spiritual, mental, emotional and physical levels. Gradually this awareness leads us to an understanding of the more subtle areas of our existence. Yoga practice prevents specific diseases and maladies by keeping the energy meridians (nadis) open and life energy (prana) flowing. Yoga is considered a mind-body intervention that is used to reduce the health effects of generalized stress. Laboratory tests have proved the yogi's increased abilities of consciously controlling autonomic or involuntary functions, such as temperature, heartbeat and blood pressure. Yoga acts both as a curative and preventive therapy. According to medical scientists, yoga therapy is successful because of the balance created in the nervous and endocrine systems which directly influences all the other systems and organs of the body. Regular practice of asanas, pranayama, yoga nidra and meditation, can help such diverse ailments such as: acidity, allergies, anger, anxiety, arthritis, asthma, back pain, common cold, constipation, depression, diabetes, headaches, high blood pressure, hypertension, nervous tension, obesity, osteoporosis, slipped disk, stiffness, stress, thyroid problems, and many more...

Benefits for the Physiological Level: (Annamaya - Pranamaya Kosha)

Increasing flexibility Cure and prevent Arthritis: The yoga poses (asanas), act upon the various joints of the body, including those joints that we never really use. By practicing yoga poses we can experience a remarkable increase in the flexibility of the joints, ligaments and tendons. Yoga is exercise and relaxation combined and this is the perfect anti-arthritis formula. Yoga's slow-motion movements and gentle pressures, reach deep into strained joints.

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Also, the easy stretches in conjunction with deep breathing exercises relieve the tension that binds up the muscles and further tightens the joints.

Cure and prevent back pain: Back pain is the most common reason to seek medical attention. Yoga has consistently been used to cure and prevent back pain by enhancing strength and flexibility.

Massaging to all the internal vital organs of the body: Research has shown that yoga poses are the only form of activity that massages all of the internal glands and organs of the body and this promotes good health and well-being.

Complete detoxification: Yoga asanas helps to gently stretch the muscles and joints allowing the optimum blood supply to various parts of the body. This helps to flush the toxins out of the body. This leading to benefits such as delayed in ageing, providing energy and a remarkable zest for life.

Excellent toning of the muscles: Yoga practice can stimulate the muscles that have become flaccid and weak.

Provide balance in the nervous system: Yoga is a great form of mediation in motion and that can balance the nervous system.

Reduction of stress: Because yoga practice is a slow and gentle form of exercise combined with breathing exercises, it can relieve body stress.

Cure and prevent respiration problems and asthma
Various studies have confirmed the beneficial effects of yoga for patients with respiratory problems. Physicians have found that the practice of asanas in combination with breathing exercises and meditation makes the treatment of asthma more effective. It has also been proved that asthma attacks can usually be prevented by yoga practice, without resorting to drugs. Patients who practice yoga have a better chance of gaining the ability to control their breathing problems. With the help of yogic breathing exercises, it is possible to control an attack of severe shortness of breath without having to seek medical help.

High Blood Pressure (hypertension)
The yoga postures, pranayama and the yoga nidra, which are basic components of yoga, have a major role to play in the treatment or prevention of high blood pressure and reduce the need for high blood pressure medication for people suffering from it.

Pain Management
Concentration during yoga postures, breathing exercises, deep relaxation techniques and meditation can also help reduce pain. Yoga is believed to reduce pain by helping the brain's pain centre regulate the gate-controlling mechanism located in the spinal cord and the secretion of natural painkillers in the body.

Weight Reduction
Yogic practices that reduce anxiety tend to reduce anxious eating. Regular yoga practice can help in weight management, for the reason that some asanas stimulate sluggish glands, to increase their hormonal secretions. There are specific asanas, such as the shoulder stand (Sarvangasana) or the fish pose

(Matsyasana), which are targeted on the thyroid gland. This gland has a great effect on our weight because it affects the body's metabolism rate. Fat metabolism is also increased, so fat is converted to muscle and energy and we have better muscle tone and a higher vitality level. Also, the practice of "yogic breath" (yogic deep breathing) increases the oxygen intake to the body cells, including the fat cells. This causes increased oxidation or burning up of fat cells.

Benefits for the Psychological Level: (Pranamaya – Manomaya Kosha)

Self-awareness
Yoga practice increases the self-awareness. The yoga practitioner learns to act instead of reacting. They start to control their feelings and learn to be conscious, living the moment, the Now and not in the past or in the future.

Self-confidence
Self-confidence, or low self-confidence, is something, which Yoga seeks to eliminate through the practices. Someone with low self-respect cannot do their work properly or becomes easily tired, irritable and haggard. One who practices yoga starts to believe deeply in themselves and in the incredible potentials, which they have inside.

Vitality and Change of Mood
Everyone who practices yoga over a period of time, reports a positive effect on both their outer appearance and energy level. Yogic postures with breathing exercises have been seen to result in having an invigorating effect on physical energy and improved mood.

Benefits for the Mental Level: (Manomaya – Vijnanamaya Kosha)

Mental balancing
A common breathing (pranayama) practice in yoga is the "alternative nostrils breathing" (Nadi Shodhana Pranayama). Electroencephalogram (EEG) studies of the electrical impulses of the brain have shown that breathing through one nostril, results in increased activity on the opposite side of the brain. The regular practice of alternative nostrils helps to improve communication between the right and left side of the brain.

Benefits for the Spiritual Level: (Vijnanamaya – Anandamaya Kosha)

Self-knowledge
Yogic philosophy and practice lead to increased Self-knowledge. This experienced knowledge is merely the spiritual side of yoga practice, which has as a goal to cultivate the "Observer" and increase the knowledge of the nature of the Self. Knowing the Self, the Observer, which is a genuine kind of knowledge, tends to get lost in the hectic pace of our daily lives and pursuit of desires. The discovering of the Self, inside us, is indeed the most precious spiritual value in our life.

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