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Health impacts of Surya Namaskar (Sun salutation)

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Abstract

With the recent rise in obesity awareness and the increased understanding of the importance of physical activity in promoting overall health, greater emphasis has been placed on improving physical fitness to enhance quality of life. Surya Namaskar, a component of Hath Yoga, has been practiced by Asian Indians for hundreds of years and is often used in place of a typical fitness program. It consists of a series of postures (asanas) that are repeated 12 times per round. Only one published study has looked specifically at Surya Namaskar, measuring the energy cost of individual asanas. However, practitioners typically perform several rounds of the asanas during a session.

Keywords: obesity awareness, physical activity, health, physical fitness

Introduction

The sun sustains life on earth. Our ancient seers acknowledged this and revered the Sun. The Surya Namaskar is an appreciation in motion that is offered to the sun. It involves twelve yoga postures or asanas signifying the sun's cycles which run at approximately twelve and a quarter years. If your system is invigorated, then your cycle will be in harmony with the solar cycle. The Surya Namaskar helps create this harmony between your physical cycle and that of the sun. Suryanamaskar is one of the best yogic exercises, as it alone gives us the benefits of different asanas and the pranayamas. It is more beneficial when it is practiced at sun rise and sun set, facing the sun with minimum clothes. It is like warm up of yoga. Suryanamaskar (Sun salutation) is combination of few asanas. Its roots can be found in yoga philosophy of Vedic traditions. It is recommended to be performed on an empty stomach. It is practiced in more than 40 different types all over India. There are set of well-balanced movements that will stretch all the muscles in the body. Thus keeping the body and mind healthy.

Chants called Sun Salutation Mantras may accompany the Surya Namaskar. These chants bring harmony in body, breath and the mind. As the practice deepens, so do the benefits. When chanted with sincere gratitude, these mantras can take the practice to an enhanced spiritual level.

Suryanamaskar Mantras and Meaning

Mantra	Meaning
1. Om Mitraaya Namaha	One who is friendly to all.
2. Om Ravaye Namaha	The shining or the radiant one.
3. Om Suryaya Namaha	The dispeller of darkness, responsible for generating activity.
4. Om Bhaanave Namaha	One who illuminates or the bright one.
5. Om Khagaya Namaha	One who is all-pervading, one who moves through the sky.
6. Om Pooshne Namaha	Giver of nourishment and fulfillment.
7. Om Hiranya Garbhaya Namaha	One who has a golden colored brilliance.
8. Om Mareechaye Namaha	Giver of light with infinite rays.
9. Om Aadityaaya Namaha	The son of Aditi, the cosmic divine mother.
10. Om Savitre Namaha	One who is responsible for life.
11. Om Arkaaya Namaha	One who is worthy of praise and glory.
12. Om Bhaskaraya Namaha	Giver of wisdom and cosmic illumination.

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1. Pranamasana

Normal Breath

Procedure: Hands together in Namaskar position. Forearms parallel to the ground Feet together. Body weight evenly distributed over both feet. Calves, quads and hamstrings tightened. Abdominal muscles tightened.

Benefits

Good for the diseases of the throat.
Voice is enhanced.
Both mind and body become healthy



2. Hasta Uttanasana

Inhale

Procedure: Palms joined and pushed up and back. Biceps touching ears. Maintain sight on wrists. Leg and Abdominal muscles remain tight.

Benefits

Both the shoulders and the food pipe (Esophagus) get exercise and diseases related to them are corrected. Eyesight is also improved.



3. Pada Hastasana

Exhale

Procedure: From previous asana keep arms straight keep back straight and bend from hips. Maintain sight on wrists. Try to put palms flat on ground. Try to touch forehead to knees. Do not bend the knees.

Benefits

Disorders of the belly and digestive system are corrected. The chest and hands become stronger and you become well balanced, beautiful and good looking. Diseases of the feet and fingers are also corrected.



4. Ashwa sanchalanasana

Inhale

Procedure: From previous asana thrust one leg back. Keep other foot inline with hands. Try to arch and look backwards.

Benefits: The posture stretches the small intestine and the seminal vesicles. Hence this posture helps in correcting the constipation and diseases of the liver. Thinness of the semen is also corrected. Diseases of the throat are also corrected.



5. Parvatasana

Exhale

Procedure: From previous asana lift knee off ground Thrust second leg backwards. Keep feet together and knees together. Maintain straight & inclined line throughout body. Keep sight on ground at right angle.

Benefits: One gets relief from the pains - especially of arms, legs and the knees. Bulging waist is trimmed and it is good for the abdominal disorders.



6. Ashtang namaskar

Hold breath

Procedure: Lower entire body to the ground slowly. Only forehead, chest, knees and toes touch ground. Keep hands and elbows close to the body. Keep feet together and knees together.

Benefits: This posture makes the arms strong. If ladies perform this Asana before getting pregnant; the breast-fed babies could be saved from the attacks of many diseases.



7. Udhvamukh Shwanasan / Bhujangasana

Inhale

Procedure: From previous asana push body forwards and upwards. Keep feet together and knees together. Tighten forearms, biceps and triceps. Tighten abdominal muscles. Arch back and look backwards.

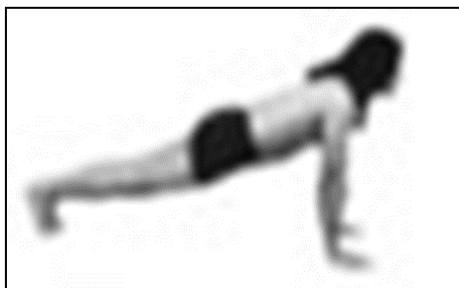
Benefits: Tones up the body and the back muscles and improves The eye sight. Corrects all kinds of disorders related to the reproductive system, corrects the irregularities in females' menstrual cycles. Blood circulation is also improved.



8. Chaturang Dandasan Exhale

Procedure: From previous asana lift knee off ground Thrust second leg backwards. Keep feet together and knees together. Maintain straight & inclined line throughout body. Keep sight on ground at right angle.

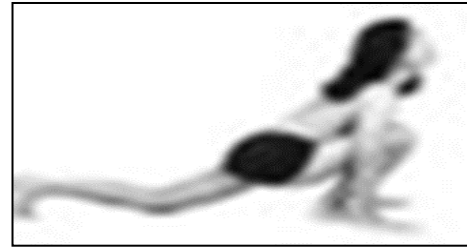
Benefits: One gets relief from the pains - specially of arms, legs and the knees. Bulging waist is trimmed and it is good for the abdominal disorders.



9. Eka Padprasaranasan Inhale

Procedure: From previous asana thrust one leg forward. Keep forward foot in line with hands. Try to arch and look backwards.

Benefits: The posture stretches the small intestine and the seminal vesicles. Hence this posture helps in correcting the constipation and diseases of the liver. Thinness of the semen is also corrected. Diseases of the throat are also corrected.

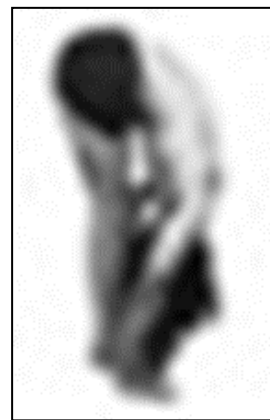


10. Uttanasan

Exhale

Procedure: From previous asana keep palms flat fixed on ground. Bring right foot forward in original position. Keep legs and arms straight. Try to touch forehead to knees. Do not bend the knees.

Benefits: Disorders of the belly and digestive system are corrected. The chest and hands become stronger and you become well balanced, beautiful and good looking. Diseases of the feet and fingers are also corrected.



11. Hasta Uttanasana

Inhale

Procedure: Palms joined and pushed up and back. Biceps touching ears. Maintain sight on wrists. Leg and Abdominal muscles remain tight.

Benefits: Both the shoulders and the food pipe (Esophagus) get exercise and diseases related to them are corrected. Eyesight is also improved



12. Pranamasan

Normal Breathing

Procedure: Hands together in Namaskar position Forearms parallel to the ground Feet together. Body weight evenly distributed over both feet. Calves, quads and hamstrings tightened. Abdominal muscles tightened.

Benefits: Good for the diseases of the throat. Voice is enhanced. Both mind and body become healthy



Health impacts of Surya Namaskar (Sun salutation)

1. Strengthens the entire digestive system (including stomach, pancreas, intestines, liver, etc.) and cures, and prevents constipation.
2. Enhances the nervous system (including the brain, spinal cord, worries and other forms of mental problems)
3. Prevent blood pressure.
4. Develops the lungs, gives you wind and prevents tuberculosis.
5. Improves the quality and circulation of the blood. Active circulation of the blood is the first law of health.
6. Stimulates glandular activity; gives a new vivacity to the glands. Owing to the stretching and compressing movements of the throat and neck the thyroid gland is stimulated and any tendency to goiter is obviated. Correct glandular functioning governs health and attractiveness.
7. Strengthens the neck, shoulders, arms, wrists, fingers, back, stomach, waist, abdomen, intestines, thighs, knees, calves and ankles. Strengthening the back is known to be a simple but efficient remedy for kidney troubles.
8. Improves and develops the chest, i. e. keeps it hard, firm and elastic; restores it to normal loveliness.
9. Improves the uterus (womb) and ovaries removes menstrual disorders such all dysmenorrheal and consequent pain and misery.
10. Child-bearing is less painful and easier. All discomforts from menopause vanish.
11. Increase the quantity and improves the quality or milk in nursing mothers.
12. Proven to halt falling hair, and its tendency to grayness and prevents baldness by increasing nutrition to the hair and scalp, and the bonding of the neck backward and forward, insures good circulation to the head.
13. Reduces redundant fat, especially the fat about the abdomen, hips, thighs, neck and chin.
14. Will remove kidney troubles. Strengthens the stomach, neck, back, and chest by the mere rolling of the stomach towards the spine, as in some of the positions of Surya Namaskar.
15. Reduces the abnormal prominence of the the Adam's apple by the forward and backward bending of the neck.
16. Improves knock-knees in walking.
17. Will increase the height of the body if the positions are correctly performed.
18. Will prevent and cure constipation.
19. Not merely gives you external form, shapeliness and muscle of the body, but improves and normalizes the

function of most of the vital internal organs.

20. Makes you immune from disease by tremendously increasing your disease-resisting power. The practical test of health is that one should never have even ordinary cold or cough, which is regarded even by some medical men as inevitable or as a matter of course. A healthy person never feels that he has any organ or limb.

Conclusion

It was concluded that suryanamaskar is effective in leading to R-Dispositions like physical relaxation, mental quiet, at ease/peace, rested and refreshed, strength and awareness and joy and reduces sleepiness, somatic stress, worry and negative emotion at a dispositional level.

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