

# AN ANCIENT INDIAN YOGA SYSTEM FOR ENHANCEMENT OF WOMEN HEALTH

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**Abstract:** In this review article Yoga System for Enhancement of Women Health. Yoga is the only path for physical, mental, social and spiritual wellness and has no side effects. In today's busy no one is able to take care of themselves especially women. Our homemakers who takes care of every one but fails to take care of themselves this effects women health in middle age or during the late middle age. The most regular problem a common mid-age women faces are lack of sleep, stress, depression, menopausal problems, heart/cardiovascular problems, etc. The best way to enhance and empower and take care of one's health is an ancient Indian yoga system.

**Keywords:** Yoga System Women Health

## Introduction:

Health of a woman requires attention throughout various stages of women's life; as at each stage there are significant changes taking place continuously. Simple steps include regular medical check-up, regular exercise, healthy eating etc to maintain good health. Prenatal care, even before planning pregnancy, helps in delivery of a healthy infant and prevents the complications of pregnancy. Prevention of obesity also helps to avoid problem like heart disease, diabetes, osteoarthritis and other health problems. In India, nutritional status of women and girls is compromised by unequal access to food, heavy work demand (mental and physical) and special nutritional need (such as iron, calcium); so females are more susceptible to illness. Especially, poor women are trapped in vicious cycle of ill-health, exacerbated by child bearing and hard physical labour. Women's health is bound up with social, cultural and economic factors that influence all aspect of their lives and consequences are borne by women themselves.

At each phase of her life, there are important preventive health care steps to follow, which helps in prevention of disease, early detection of medical problem and their management. Since the female reproductive system plays such an important role throughout the life of a woman, it requires special consideration. Although the primary function of the reproductive system is to conceive and bear children, a female's reproductive system makes a major contribution to her being a woman. Due to the complexity of her reproductive system, she can experience a number of problems. Many hormones, especially those affecting growth and behavior, are to be balanced. Nevertheless, women are more often portrayed as being under the influence of their hormones, as being subject to hormonal "tides" or "storms." The sex hormones produced by the ovaries are not only involved in the growth, maintenance, and the repair of the reproductive tissues, but they also influence other body tissues, including bone mass as well. As women age, their health becomes a multidimensional issue influenced by career, changes in home life, diet and physical activity, economy, society and environment. Women spend significant part of their lives in postmenopausal states.

Yoga is a method of control of activities of the mind it is also defined as physical, mental and spiritual practice or exercise. Yoga helps an individual not only to maintain a good health but also achieve mental stability and spiritual satisfaction. In order to achieve a positive state there are eight methods or eightfold path in yoga that is :-

1. Yama: non-injury to others, truthfulness, nonstealing.
2. Niyama : purity of body and mind, self-discipline.
3. Asana: right posture
4. Pranayama: control of prana, the subtle of life currents in body.
5. Pratyahar: Control of organs or indriya nigraha
6. Dharana: focused concentration.
7. Dhyana: meditation
8. Samadhi: superconscious experience of the oneness of the individualized soul with cosmic spirit.

Yoga or the Yogasutra is mostly authoritative an ancient scripture on yoga. Yoga developed around 5,000 years ago according to the researchers . The early writings of yoga were transcribed on palm leaves and wooden blocks that could be easily damaged and destroyed. Yoga is part of Vedic literature and was proposed by Maharishi Patanjali. Yoga comes from a Sanskrit word Yuj which means the union of the individual and universal consciousness. So an individual practicing yoga not only has a relaxed lifestyle bot can also reach the ultimate destiny of life.

**Women and Health:**

According to ancient Hindu scriptures, no religious rite can be performed with perfection by a man without the participation of his wife. Wife's participation is essential to any religious rite. Married men along with their wives are allowed to perform sacred rites on the occasion of various important festivals. Wives are thus befittingly virtuously called 'Ardhangini' (better half) and they are not only given importance but on equal position with men.

Woman plays a major role in shaping the family, society and the nation. Health of women is important as they have several responsibilities both at social and domestic fronts. She has to perform multiple activities at home & office, thus the health of women is of prime consideration. Life-style of a family, partially or totally is dependent upon her. When women are in healthy and sound condition, it facilitates to achieve larger and broader perspective of health and happiness within the society. Women often focus on health care of family and generally neglect their own health. Therefore, special care to maintain good health is important. In Indian male dominated society, woman is exposed to different situations inside and outside the home. She has to take active participation in smooth running of family with stress free condition. She may have to imbibe stress of others on their behalf. She stores up all stress and tension that bursts out in the form of serious health problems.

**Relevance of Yoga practices in Women's life:**

Yoga is an art of living which is important for everyone to be acquainted with and acclimatize for women. Yoga importance need to be mentioned, the contribution of women for mankind and building of society is unmatched. Therefore it is very important for women to be mentally and physically strong. There are few yogic practices which are specifically beneficial for women health enhancement.

**Standing postures:**

Tadasana: Helps in increasing height, keeping away from laziness, drowsiness and depression. Balanced, beautiful and give shape to the body, increasing circulation of internal parts of the body and makes backbone strong and healthy.

Katichakrasana: It makes waist flexible, healthy and slim. It eradicate constipation, makes shoulder and trunk strong and improves the respiratory system.

Trikonasana: Helps in increasing height, slimmer waist, flexibility in back bone, strengthen hands, arms, shoulders thighs, knees and legs. It protects from high blood pressure.

**Sitting Postures:**

Bhoonamanasana: It makes thighs and hips muscles flexible and keeps healthy and strong. Shoulders become flexible and strong, waist become slim and flexible. Beneficial for piles. Increase patience and calmness and concentration. Improve the functions of kidney, digestive system and reproductive organs.

Vajrasana: through vajrasana body would be strong like a Diamond, this helps in digestion perform this asana immediately after the meal. It is god gift for women in their periods related problems and keep back and spine healthy.

Shashank asana: this provides relaxation to the body, calmness in mind and gives extra energy to brain. Hence relaxes one from anger and aggression. Optimistic views come to the practicers mind. It increases the ability to conceive and removes problems of miscarriage, controls the blood pressure and anemia, that means this asana helps in maintaining heart and liver functions.

Ustrasana: It increases flexibility of spinal cord and strengthens the back muscles, excite nerves of spinal cord and increases blood circulation in pelvic area moreover it expands chest area and removes the problems of respiratory system.

**Prone line postures:**

Bhujangasana: It improves spinal flexibility and strengthens the muscles in the arms and back. It is effective in relieving menstrual irregularities and constipation.

Shalabasana: It strengthens the lower abdominal region. It stimulates the stomach and intestines. It strengthens the muscles of the upper legs, lower back and the bladder.

Dhanurasana: This asana is beneficial for the digestive and reproductive systems. It stretches the stomach and intestines, alleviating constipation. The backward bend loosens up the vertebrae and stimulates the spinal nerves, relieving backache, rounded back and drooping shoulders.

**Supine line postures:**

Uttana padasana: It helps to reduce the abdominal girth and strengthens the lower abdomen. It facilitates the blood flow from the lower extremity to the pelvic/ abdominal region.

Setubandhasana: This asana gives good back curvature and thus helps to maintain good health of the spine which is beneficial for women suffering from low back pain, sciatica etc.

Viparita karni: It helps to reduce the abdominal girth and strengthens the lower abdomen. It also improves blood circulation to pelvic region.

Shavasana: it relaxes, rejuvenates, recharges, the body organs.

Kapalabhati: reduces the abdominal waist, it cleans the forehead region it give calmness to mind.

Nadi Shodhana: It is classified as a tranquilizing pranayama and it has healing effect on the body. It soothes the nervous system and calms the mind. It helps to relieve insomnia and mental tension.

Bhramari: It will help to reduce the stress and tension. It relaxes all the muscles and nerves of the body.

Meditation: : it empowers, energies and enhances the whole mind and body.

**Yoga and Health:**

Health is understood as homeostasis in a living organism. This is the state in which organism is in balance with input and output of mass and energy. The prospect for continued survival of organism is positive. Basically health is understood as the perfect equilibrium of body, mind, intellect and soul. The person who enjoys lightness of body, slowness of breathing, calmness of mind, control over emotions, action in relaxation and blissful awareness is said to be healthy. The W.H.O. defines health as “a state of complete physical, mental, social well being and not merely absence of disease or infirmity”. This definition is in conformity with that explained in Yoga and ancient writings.

Yoga is a self-corrective technique and also a treatment modality, which can prevent and treat the perimenopausal syndrome but also can help in preventing many of the stress-related problems of the modern lifestyle that the women are prone to after menopause. The philosophy and practices of Yoga provide a good field of study for internal experimentation during the emptiness, post retirement phase of a woman's life and help her to grow in her personality to lead a healthy and happy life.

**Quality of life of women:**

Quality of life is defined as individual's perception of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns. It is a multidimensional health concept which represents mainly subjective symptoms that may influence the sense of wellbeing and day to day function. It includes several important domains such as physical, psychological, social and environmental health. Women may experience significant QOL changes during menopause. More than 80% of women experience physical and psychological symptoms in the years when they approach menopause with various distresses and disturbances in their lives leading to decrease in the quality of life. For some women, accompanying signs and symptoms during transition can disrupt their daily activities and their sense of well being. The important factors which affect the QOL are mainly hot flash, night sweats, insomnia, depressed mood and bladder problem.

**Review literature and Research studies:**

Yoga is a perfect mixture of physical postures or exercise, breathing methods, meditation, deep relaxation that bring about physical, mental and spiritual stability. Some of the major effects of yoga observed are:-

- a. Depression: It is the most common problem in women health leading to many others regulated. Breathing exercises mainly help to reduce distractions and thus depressions. Yoga brings about changes in electrophysiology and neurotransmission thus reducing depression.
- b. Fatigue: Our body can feel fatigue due to number of reasons. Use of yoga, yoga asanas, etc. facilitate increased blood sloppy to all parts of body and thus increased oxygen supply. Some of the exercise include big toe pose, bound angle pose, bow pose, camel pose, cobra pose etc.
- c. Anxiety and anxiety disorders: A state of excessive uneasiness, worry, or fear of unknown things is called anxiety and anxiety disorder, which needs to be and treated. Regular yoga practice can reduce the feeling of restless this can be achieved by a complete package of asanas, pranayamas that create a new positivity. Some of the exercises includes cat stretch pose, bridge pose, fish pose, bow pose, downward-facing dog, headstand pose, corpse pose.

- d. Stress: Regular practice of yoga triggers some of triggers the points and thus reduces stress and makes one feel relaxed. Some of the poses are easy pose, cow pose, extended puppy pose, seated forward pose etc.
- e. Improved sleep: Most people complain about sleep. Irregular sleep patterns are due to a number of reasons which is most common in middle aged women. Yoga is most effective to reduce this problem, some of the poses are hero pose, cat pose, cow pose child's pose etc.
- f. Physical Fitness: Yoga increases oxygen supply to all body parts, increases blood flow better bone health, builds muscle strength, improves flexibility, protects spine etc.
- g. Sympathetic and para sympathetic activation: The different poses or the asanas of yoga stimulates the nervous system and nerve signaling. This helps the body and mind to relax and brings about healing effect in body.
- h. Cardiovascular health: Yoga is a practice that emphasizes breath, focus and meditation. This is thus a healthy and natural alternative for heart health it reduces BP, removes bad cholesterol levels, boosts blood circulation, increases lung capacity and improves heart health.
- i. Menopausal Symptoms: Menstruation is a natural phenomenon in women but in middle age or late 40's when menstruation comes to an end, it leads to many other problems thus regular practice of yoga improve health.
- j. Mood swings: Mood swings is common problem in women this is caused by improper lifestyle yoga bring about relaxation. Meditation increases oxygen supply to brain reducing carbon content and improves mental and physical health.
- k. Glucose regulation: Improper diet and stress causes diabetes. Yoga is not only a exercise but also a method to keep our body and minds in peace. Thus Prevents diabetes.
- l. Hormone imbalance: Yoga triggers all the parts that is all the organs in body thus stimulates and also improves hormones regulation in the body.

Menopause is the permanent cessation of menstruation resulting from the loss of follicular activity. The onset of menopause is characterized by irregularities in menstrual bleeding or cessation of menstruation in the past twelve months. The word 'menopause' is derived from men and pauses and is a direct description of the physiological event in women where menstruation ceases to occur. Women experience both specific symptoms due to estrogen deficiency, such as hot flashes, night sweats, fatigue, pain, decreased libido and also non-specific psychological syndrome characterized largely by anxiety and depression at the time of menopause (Joffe H et al., 2003; Greene JG.,2008 and Warren MP., 2007). During menopause, approximately 70% of women report hot flashes, which are more common in women with a higher body mass index, with lower income and education, who smoke cigarettes, or who are black (Gold EB et al.,2006). The pathogenesis of hot flashes has not yet been fully elucidated, but the circuitry involving estrogen and neurotransmitters, norepinephrine and serotonin specifically, are hypothesized to play a major role in the altered homeostatic thermoregulatory mechanisms underlying these events. The neurotransmissive degeneration that follows hypo-estrogenemia, could be responsible for the hot flashes and also the psychological disturbances (Tinelli et al, 2003). Hormone therapy is the indicated line of treatment for menopause associated vasomotor symptoms such as hot flashes but having its own advantages and complications. Due to risks associated with Hormone therapy among postmenopausal women, alternative low risk non-pharmacological intervention and behavioral therapies are being explored for the treatment of vasomotor symptoms.

Research study following 8 weekly 90 minutes sessions of restorative yoga poses showed a reduction in hot flush score by 34.2% compared to baseline (Cohen et al, 2007). A 10-week yoga program comprising breathing techniques, postures, and relaxation poses showed a significant improvements in total menopausal symptoms, hot-flash daily interference; and sleep efficiency, disturbances, and quality (Booth et al, 2007). In a 4-month randomized controlled exercise trial with three arms i.e. walking, Yoga and control, also demonstrated enhanced positive affect and menopause-related QOL and reduced negative affect (Elvasky & McAuley, 2007). 12-week 3x2 randomized, controlled, factorial design trial comparing Yoga, Exercise and Omega-3 Supplements showed significant improvement in Menopause Quality of Life (MENQOL), vasomotor symptoms and sexuality domain scores following 12 weeks of Yoga intervention compared to baseline (Reed SD et al.,2014). Another study involving supervised 1 hour/day, 5 days/week for 8 weeks of group Yoga practice consisting of breathing practices, sun salutation and cyclic meditation compared to control consisting of a set of simple physical exercises showed significant reduction in hot flashes, night sweats and sleep disturbance in Yoga group with no change in the control group. The study also showed a significant improvement in attention, concentration and Memory following Yoga intervention among 108 perimenopausal women between 40 and 55 years of age with follicle-stimulating hormone level equal to or greater than 15 miu/ml (Chattha R et al.,2008). Recent systematic review and meta-analysis by Cramer H et al., 2018 included thirteen RCTs with 1306 participants. Yoga intervention compared with no treatment elucidated significant reduction in total menopausal symptoms, psychological, somatic, vasomotor and urogenital symptoms. Compared with exercise controls, only an effect on vasomotor symptoms was found concluding Yoga to be effective and safe for reducing menopausal symptoms (Cramera H et al.,2018).

### Conclusion:

A regular practice of yoga helps an individual to gain inner peace thus improves mental health this mainly due to the meditation and other breathing exercise whereas physical poses help an individual to attain physical fitness. Middle aged women itself were considered in this study as the women fail to take care of themselves in the busy schedules and most of serious health problems such as glucose intolerance, hormone imbalance, etc occur in the middle age itself.

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