

Beneficial Impact of Yoga Asana on Digestive System

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Abstract

Ancient yogis recognized that good digestion is the key to radiant health and tried to understand the mind-body connection. Bad digestion is the root of all evil, says Hippocrates. Digestive system is one of the important systems in body. The human digestive system consists of the gastrointestinal tract and accessory organs. It is also known as gastrointestinal or alimentary system. Digestion involves the breakdown of food you eat and liquids consumed into smaller and smaller components, until they can be absorbed and assimilated into the body, to give energy and nutrients. Nutrients include carbohydrates, proteins, fats, vitamins, minerals and water. The body uses these nutrients for giving energy, growth and development and repairing of cells and tissues. The root cause of all disorders lies in poor digestion. In order to keep this system healthy yoga can be used as a tool. Some of the Kriyas like Dhauti, Basti and Nauli influence the functioning of the digestive system significantly. But before starting the practice of yoga asana the food we eat too plays a big role in how efficiently we are able to digest it. The practice of yoga brings about a higher sense of awareness in the practitioner. Over time we will find ourselves selecting foods that bring about a sense of balance, harmony and well-being. According to the science of yoga, overeating is a crime committed against the body. It is important to acquire knowledge about the digestive system and the organs involved in it in details.

Keywords: *Yoga, Digestive system and Digestion.*

Introduction

Ancient yogis recognized that good digestion is the key to radiant health and tried to understand the mind-body connection. Etymologically the word Yoga is derived from the Sanskrit word “Yuj” meaning to unite, to combine and to integrate (Mangalgowri, 2012). Patanjali’s Ashtang Yoga consists of eight limbs: Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi. According to Ayurveda, Agni is the source of nutrition, awareness and intelligence. There are many manifestations of Agni that affect the body and mind - from

the fire of awareness, to the central digestive fire. Ultimately, Agni is the gatekeeper of good health. A sedentary lifestyle, imbalanced diet, and frequent stress are the main enemies of our digestive system. The main organs of the digestive system start to end are the mouth, esophagus, stomach, small intestine, large intestine, rectum and anus. It also includes the salivary glands, gall bladder, pancreas and liver which make digestive juices and enzymes that help the body digest food and liquids. The process of digestion has three stages: the cephalic phase, the gastric phase and the intestinal

phase. As a result, digestive disorders encompass a variety of diseases ranging from mild to severe such as indigestion, bleeding, bloating, constipation, colitis, gastritis, heartburn, cancer, irritable bowel syndrome, diarrhea, and flatulence. Digestive disorders affect millions of Americans every year. According to research published in the American Journal of Gastroenterology (2004), 63 million people in North America suffer from constipation. Digestive disorders are most often psychosomatic symptoms of stress, nervousness, anxiety and depression. The term digestion refers to the breakdown of food in micronutrients to provide energy to our body and elimination of waste products carried out by liver, kidneys and lungs from the body. Undigested, unwanted and toxic residues of food are passed on to the rectum and then eliminated through the anus during the process of defecation.

The food we eat too plays a big role in how efficiently we are able to digest it. The practice of yoga brings about a higher sense of awareness in the practitioner. Over time we will find ourselves selecting foods that bring about a sense of balance, harmony and well-being food that is natural and fresh and wholegrain over refined, fried and processed food. According to the science of yoga, overeating is a crime committed against the body.

According to the science of yoga, overeating is a crime committed against the body. Consider the digestive system as a juicer, 'Agni' as juicer blades, body toxins as fruit waste, and energy as juice. If the

juicer blades are weak, there is less juice and more fruit waste. So, if the 'agni' is weak, the digestive system produces less energy and as a result more toxins will be accumulated in the cells. Thus, a strong Agni is required for a good digestive system. Digestive system completes digestion in three stages. Stage 1– Stomach (digestion), Stage 2– Small intestine (nutrient absorption) and Stage 3– Colon (water absorption, elimination). It is always advisable to eat simple and healthy meals. Digestive system works best if fresh foods such as vegetables, salads, fruits, curd and buttermilk are consumed at a regular basis.

Yoga can become our good helper in combating digestive problems. Yoga is a traditional practice that people are using for thousands of years for good health through body mind coordination. It includes Asanas, Pranayama Kriya,s and Dhyana. Yoga can make your Agni strong and help in improving your digestion. Yoga poses have a direct, positive effect on our digestive system. Yoga Asanas create movements in the human body that greatly enhances the activities of the digestive organs. With regular practice of yoga, we find ourselves calmer and more relaxed physically and mentally. The digestive fire is aroused and as a result it increases the appetite and balances the metabolism. Yoga Asanas increase blood flow to the digestive tract and stimulate the intestinal action known as peristalsis that results in digestion more efficiently. Asanas stretches the body and massages the abdominal muscles, which causes food to move efficiently along the digestive tract. Bowel movement is regulated and as a result constipation

is relieved. Stretching and contracting of muscles improves the flow of blood and oxygen in the digestive organs. Yoga asanas keep the mind active and happy. You are more likely to eat a balanced diet and this eases digestion. Regular practice of yoga discourages fatty deposits. The body is effectively detoxed. Toxins accumulated from a bad diet, unhealthy lifestyles and stress are flushed out. Abdominal breath stimulates peristalsis and relaxes the abdomen. It can be performed seated, laying down or standing. Close the mouth with the inhalation, slow down the intake of breath and direct it down into the abdomen, expanding the belly out like a balloon. With an exhalation, prolong the release of air through the nose and relax the belly back towards the spine. After some practice, count the length of the inhalation and exhalation and bring them to an equal count. Repeat 10–20 times, as practice progresses, lengthen the count of both. Practice this breath on its own or in yoga pose practice session. In essence, all of the tools of Yoga work together to reduce the stress response rebalance the autonomic nervous system and create a powerful relaxation response that allows the healing functions of the parasympathetic nervous system to occur.

Aim

To study the beneficial impact of Yoga asana on digestive system.

Objectives

To study the beneficial impact of yoga asana on digestive system and to relive from various digestive disorders.

Asanas Beneficial For Digestive System

- 1. Dhanurasana:** It is also called bow pose. It improves digestion and appetite, cures constipation, improves function of liver, pancreas, small as well as large intestine, and it also strengthens abdominal muscles.
- 2. Halasasana:** It is also known as Plow pose. It improves the functions of abdominal organs; especially the pancreas is stimulated for the secretion of insulin. The breathing movement of diaphragm helps to massage the abdominal organs. It cures pain in abdomen, indigestion, hyperacidity and also useful in diarrhea but it should be avoided in colitis.
- 3. Matsyasana:** It is also known as Fish pose. Most of the abdominal and stomach problems are corrected as intestines and abdominal muscles are stretched and tones. It is good for constipation and bleeding piles. It brings down the accumulated fecal matter to the rectum.
- 4. Janushirshasana:** It improves digestive system and helps to heal gastric ailments. By this pose the pressure from heel placed on the nerve which stimulate pancreas to help digestion.
- 5. Makarasana:** It is also called crocodile pose. By this asana digestive organs especially large intestine get massaged. It is most beneficial in constipation, stomach pain and in dysentery etc.
- 6. Halasasana:** It is also called Plow pose. It improves the functions of abdominal organs; especially the pancreas is

stimulated for the secretion of insulin. The breathing movement of diaphragm helps to massage the abdominal organ. It cures pain in abdomen, indigestion, hyperacidity and also useful in diarrhea but it should be avoided in colitis.

7. Parsva Sukhasana: This is a great beginner move for people looking to stretch their obliques, belly muscles, lower and upper back and shoulders. The gentle stretch may help alleviate bloating and gas and support general digestion.

8. Ardha Matsyendrasana: The twisting motion of this move is thought to promote bowel regularity by aiding the small and large intestine in peristalsis. This is the movement that propels food and waste through the GI tract.

9. Bhujangasana: It is also known as Cobra pose. Cobra pose mimics a cobra in its upright position. It helps stretch belly muscles, improve posture and general digestion.

10. Utkatasana: Utkatasana helps with the gastric problems and digestion difficulties. It stimulates and activates digestion.

Discussions

Yoga plays an important role in our life. It also works as a medicine or medical therapy. Now days everybody is leading a stressful and unhealthy life. Yoga improves creativity, concentration and sharpens our memory. In the hustle and bustle of modern life, our emotional stability declines. But yoga prevents that

situation and improves stamina, muscle strength and mental stability. Helps to stay focused and improves strength. There is a great importance of yoga. Yoga teaches us the knowledge of how to lead a healthy living. Yoga asana also improves muscle strength, stamina and brings immune and mental stability.

Conclusions

The art of practicing yoga helps in controlling an individual's body, mind and soul. It brings together physical and mental discipline to achieve a peaceful and healthy life. It also helps relieve digestive issues by decreasing stress. Yoga asana directly helps the digestion process which helps to improve the digestive system and so indirectly get rid of digestive disorders.

Recommendations

On the basis of findings and in the light of conclusion drawn from the study, the following recommendations are made:

- A similar study can be conducted on the cardiovascular system.
- A similar study may be conducted on different body systems.
- A similar study can be conducted on the subjects of different age groups.
- A similar study may be conducted on athletes and non-athletes.

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