

MAGIC OF AYURVEDA AND YOGA: AN OVERVIEW

Rajendra R Dandawate¹, Sunita R Dandawate², Avinash Gholap³, Rahul B Ghuge⁴

1. Department of Zoology, Arts, Commerce and Science College, Sonai, 414105, (MS) India
2. Department of Engineering Science (Physics), Sanjivani Rural Education Society's College of Engineering, Kopargaon, 423601, (MS) India.
3. Department of Zoology, PVP College of Arts, Commerce and Science College, Pravaranagar, 413713, (MS) India.
4. Department of Pharmaceutical Chemistry, MET Institute of Pharmacy, Nashik- 03, (MS) India.

SUMMARY

Ayurveda is related to healing the body using the natural therapies and medicines whereas yoga is considered to be the science of mind and the body purification. But the two very well compliment each other in their own unique ways. Ayurveda and yoga go hand in hand, complimenting each other and helping the human body to lead a healthy and long life. The present review also states the various Ayurvedic and Yogic diet, method of treatment and tips, also sates the various important asana which is to be practiced to control various diseases.

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Address for Correspondence:

Dr. Rajendra R Dandawate

Assistant Professor & HOD

Department of Zoology, Arts, Commerce and Science College, Sonai, 414105, (MS) India

A/P: Sonai, Tal- Nevasa, Dist- Ahmednagar, (MS) India.

[E-mail-vins_gaware1@rediffmail.com](mailto:vins_gaware1@rediffmail.com)

Introduction

Ayurveda and yoga are sister Vedic sciences that have been united for thousands of years for the sake of healing body, mind, and consciousness. Generally speaking, Ayurveda deals more with the health of the body, while yoga deals with purifying the mind and consciousness, but in reality they complement and embrace each other. Besides sharing a philosophical foundation, both systems have many similarities in relation to attitude, nutrition, diet, hygiene, exercise, cleansing practices, as well as spiritual practices. Traditionally, a student of yoga would first live close to and serve the guru for many years, during which time he would learn healthy habits. The basic Ayurvedic principles for health and longevity were passed on in the lineage in oral form to serve as a foundation for a life of sadhana (spiritual practice).¹

FIRST, LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT THE SIMILARITIES BETWEEN YOGA AND AYURVEDA^{2,3}

- Both are ancient Vedic teachings. Yoga originates in the Yajur Veda, while Ayurveda originates in the Atharva Veda and Rig Veda.
- Both recognize that keeping the body healthy is vital for fulfilling the four aims of life: Dharma (duty), Artha (wealth), Kama (desire), and Moksha (liberation).
- Both recognize that the balance of doshas (humors), dhatus (tissues), and malas (waste products) is essential for maintaining good health.
- Both share virtually the same metaphysical anatomy and physiology, which consists of 72,000 nadis (subtle channels), 7 main chakras (energy centers), 5 bodily sheaths, and the Kundalini Shakti (energy).
- Both advocate the use of diet, herbs, asana, pranayama, meditation, mantra, astrology, prayer, puja, and rituals for healing the entire being.
- Both encourage physical health as a good foundation for mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being.
- Both share the same view on psychology. Ayurveda embraces all six of the main schools of philosophy including the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali and Vedanta (a non-dual philosophical and spiritual path). They both understand that the attachment to the body-mind complex is the root cause of all suffering and that the ultimate state of health is experienced when we abide in our true nature, which is total peace, regardless of the state of the physical body.
- Both use cleansing methods for the body, all of which encourage the removal of waste products and toxins through their natural routes of elimination. Ayurveda has panchakarma (five cleansing actions) and yoga uses Shat Karma (six purification measures).

AYURVEDIC AND YOGIC DIET

Ayurveda is more concerned with food being constitutionally balanced, while Yoga promotes a diet that is sattvic (light and pure). A combination of both aspects is the best choice for a yogi or anyone wanting to make real progress on a spiritual path.

Ayurvedic diet

- According to dosha.
- Primarily vegetarian (meat is used as medicine, mainly for extreme deficiencies).
- Primarily cooked (raw food in moderation, especially for vata types).
- Containing six tastes.⁴

Yogic diet

- Sattwic vegetarian diet.
- Easy to digest.
- Simple meals (to limit desire).
- Both cooked and raw.
- Foods recommended in the Hatha Yoga Pradipika consist of rejuvenating substances such as wheat, whole grain, white basmati, corn, raw milk, raw sugar, butter, ghee, honey, dried ginger, mung beans, pure water, and vegetables.
- Fruits, roots and nuts.
- Avoiding excessive hot, sour, salty, fermented, and fried foods.
- Avoiding tamasic (dulling) foods like meat, onions, garlic and mushrooms as a regular part of the daily diet.⁵

AYURVEDA

Ayurveda (Devanāgarī: the 'science of life') is a system of traditional medicine native to the Indian Subcontinent and practiced in other parts of the world as a form of alternative medicine. In Sanskrit, the word Ayurveda consists of the words *āyus*, meaning 'life', and *Veda*, meaning 'related to knowledge' or 'science'. Evolving throughout its history, Ayurveda remains an influential system of medicine in South Asia. The earliest literature of Ayurveda appeared during the Vedic period in India. The *Sushruta Samhita* and the *Charaka Samhita* were influential works on traditional medicine during this era. Ayurvedic practitioners also identified a number of medicinal preparations and surgical procedures for curing various ailments and diseases. Ayurveda is considered to be a form of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) within the western world, where several of its methods, such as the use of herbs, massage, and Yoga as exercise or alternative medicine, are applied on their own as a form of CAM treatment.⁶



Figure 1: The god of Ayurveda Dhanvantari.

HISTORY^{7,8}

4000 BC	It is true that many objects and compounds now found in our environment did not exist in 4000 BC . This does not mean that the principles of Ayurveda are redundant and cannot be applied to modern life.
3500 BC	The traditional system of medicine in India, the practice of Ayurveda extends to 3500 BC . The term Ayurveda means "Science of Life," and it has a long history working with rejuvenation, longevity, and mental health through diet, lifestyle, herbs, massage, yoga,
3000 BC	AquaSols, "Inspired by Ayurveda Defined by Modern Science" are a range of Water Soluble Extracts of various herbal materials from Sabinsa. Ayurveda is the traditional practice of medicine in India with a history dating back to 3000 BC .
2600 BC	Die gezielte Anwendung von Massagen zur Heilung wurde erstmals 2600 v. Chr. in China erwähnt. In Verbindung mit ätherischen Ölen und Kräutern gibt es auch frühe Nachweise in der indischen Ayurveda .
2500 BC	Ayurveda is the world's oldest recorded medical system, dating back as far as 2500 BC Ayurveda is an overall approach to physical and mental well-being. Extremely scientific in its approach, Ayurveda utilized, among other things, well-documents botanical research.
2000 BC	The History of Ayurveda dates back to 2000 BC , though there are diverse opinions on its origin. When ancient India was in the period of 'Vedas,' there was profound understanding of the cosmic energy from the ancient sages.
1900 BC	In India the traditional form of medicine, Ayurveda , saw extensive use of turmeric in early 1900 BC . The use of minerals and herbs in specific proportions was suggested by the then physicians Sushruta and Charaka.
1800 BC	Infant massage has been recognised for its importance throughout history in many cultures. It was used in India in Ayurvedic medicine from as long ago as 1800 BC . It was also used in China during the Qing dynasty (1644-1911).
1500 BC	The history of Ayurveda can be traced back to BC 1500 . DHANWANDHARV was considered to be the God of Hindu system of medicine. He was born during the churning of the ocean during a tug of war between Gods and DEMONS.
800 BC	The Shalihotrasamhita is as significant regarding the treatment of horses as the Charak Samhita and the Sushruta Samhita are, on the treatment of human beings. It is estimated to be 800 BC . This book is also known as Haya Ayurveda and Turagshastra
600 BC	Ayurveda evolved around 600 BC . At that time Ayurvedic scholars did not have microscopes; nevertheless, they knew that life starts in the mother's womb in 'liquid' form and becomes 'solid' at the time of birth.
500 AD	Its author, Vagbhata, was born in Sindh (a province in Pakistan) circa 500 AD and was taught Ayurvedic medicine by his father and a Buddhist monk, named Avalokita.
1930	The company, founded in 1930 , believes in the "utilisation of modern research and development practises to rediscover and validate ayurveda's secrets". Himalaya claims to offer "head-to-heel" herbal solutions for the entire family.
2004	One in five Ayurvedic medicines (search) contains toxic levels of lead, mercury, or arsenic. The products put users at risk for metal ... Ayurvedic medicine originated in India more than 2000 years ago and relies heavily on herbal medicine (search), writes lead researcher Robert B.
2009	Designed after an ancient north Indian temple, the pandal will also feature paintings depicting the history of ayurveda and its famous practitioners over the ages. "We are taking the help of experts to elaborate on the virtues of herbs that have been traditionally used in India.

Table 1: History of Ayurveda

THE CONCEPT BEHIND AYURVEDA

Ayurveda believes that there are energy types in a human body, called '**Doshas**'. There are three kinds of doshas in the human body as per Ayurveda, namely **Vata, Pitta, and Kapha**. In general only 1 or 2 off the three are dominant in a human body. The health of any human being or any living being is judged on the basis of the balance of these Doshas in Ayurveda. Ayurveda says that diseases in a living being are nothing but imbalance of the doshas, which can be easily regulated by following very simple ayurvedic routines. **Yoga, pranayams, oil massages** and controlled eating habits can easily cure any kind of disease ranging from common cold to severe heart problems.⁹

ELEMENTS OF AYURVEDA

The 5 elements

Water, Space, Earth, Air, Fire

Elements in balance = health

One element more dominate = imbalance, start of illness

- Ayurveda treats people as individuals.
- Firey energetic people have too much pitta.
- Earthy people are heavy and lazy in mind and body.
- Airy people move about a lot and find it hard to stay in one place.
- As our mood changes so do the elements.
- Elements move up or down depending on our lifestyle.
- Our environment, job, family life, thoughts, etc. determines which elements dominate us more.¹⁰

BENEFITS OF AYURVEDIC HERBS

- Herbs help in **proper digestion and absorption** of nutrients from the food. Some of the herbs even work as good appetizers and being rich in roughages.
- Herbs are also very prominently used to **strengthen the immunity** of the human body and also as preventive medicines for many general ailments.
- Some herbs are even used to provide **stability and nourishment** to the human body, in case the patient is going through a **treatment for some chronic disease**.
- General ailments like common cold and flu can be very easily treated using ayurvedic medicines or even some house hold ayurvedic remedies. Such house hold remedies are prominently used as the first stage of ayurvedic treatment.
- Studies reveal that ayurvedic herbs can prove to be a **better alternative to allopathic treatment**, and even **provide successful ailments** to diseases like **cancer and AIDS**, which are incurable till date.¹¹

THE MAGIC OF SYNERGY¹²

Ayurveda calls it sanyog the science of combining to create results far greater than the benefits of each herb in isolation. Every herb has a specific function.

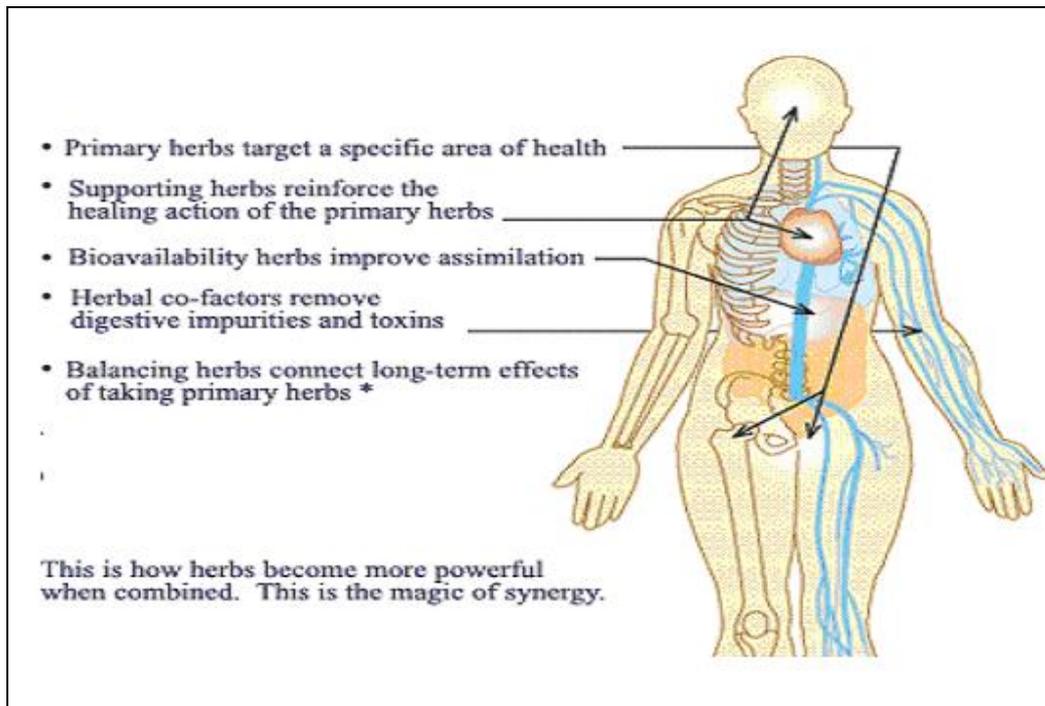


Figure 2: The Magic of Synergy of Herbs

The balancing herbs are crucial because they cancel any side effects that could result from taking single herbs in isolation over the long term.

AYURVEDIC TREATMENT - METHODS OF TREATMENT AND TIPS ¹³

Ayurvedic treatment is a multidisciplinary approach, unlike Allopathic treatment where the main stress is on medicines.

METHODS OF TREATMENT

Palliative Treatment

Palliative treatment refers to means for reduction of increased doshas for curing the disease or decreasing its symptoms.

It consists of following measures:-

- a) Sneha Karma or use of oily substances externally for massage etc. or internally.
- b) Sweda Karma or fomentation.
- c) Exercise.
- d) Exposure to sun.
- e) Exposure to fresh air.
- f) Taking medicines which increase digestion.
- g) Taking medicines which destroy toxins.

Purification Treatment	<p>Purification refers to removal of accumulated toxins or Doshas from the body. This is done by 5 methods known as Panchakarma.</p> <p>They are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Vamana or induced vomitingb) Virechana or induced purgationc) Basti or enemad) Nasya or nasal medicatione) Rakta mokshana or blood-letting.
Other forms of Ayurvedic Treatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Fasting.b) Urine therapy.c) Rejuvenation (rasaayana) therapy.d) Fish therapy (for asthma).e) Ayurvedic Mental Therapy for Ailments.

Table 2 : Method of Ayurvedic treatment

IN AYURVEDA, THE TYPES OF MEDICINES BASED ON THE SOURCE FROM WHICH THEY ARE OBTAINED, ARE CLASSIFIED AS FOLLOWS

1. Herbal medicines - which are extracted from plants & herbs.
2. Mineral (metal) medicines - which are extracted from minerals, gems and jewels.
3. Herbomineral preparations - which are a combination of both herbs and minerals.

ADVANTAGES OF AYURVEDA ¹⁴

- It is preventive, protective, health primitive and curative in nature. At the same time herbal remedies are self contained, and nutritive rendering them harmless and non toxic. This provides a constructive approach against destructive forces.
- Ayurveda is not man made but is believed to be divine gift. It is for us to study, seek, search and take the benefits from the treasure of knowledge.
- Ayurveda is mainly based on herbs, plants, flowers, fruits, vegetables and all vegetation that grows around us in plenty. It is our native system based on the peculiar indian conditions. Further whatever is available on our own country is bound to be more suitable in creating good health to us rather than borrowed knowledge as well as materials. Charaka samhita stresses the same point.
- Ayurveda begins when everything fails and when the treatment is uncertain and prolonged; ayurvedic approach is the right choice since it cures chronic and stubborn diseases by its deep-rooted treatment procedures and drugs.

YOGA ¹⁵

The Sanskrit term ‘yoga’ means union. Hence, ‘Yoga’ refers to the synthesis of the body and the mind. The source of yoga is called Hatha yoga. It is from this form of yoga that the other forms of yoga were distilled and enunciated. Yoga is turning out to be one of the most practiced means of physical and mental exercises across the world. One of the popular forms of Hatha Yoga that has been repackaged is ‘Hot yoga’ of Vikram Choudhury. Hot yoga is having lots of fan following in USA.

IS YOGA A MEDICINE

Yoga is indeed a medicine. It is a medicine based on ancient science rather than modern allopath. Yoga is essentially a kind of mind-body therapy whose benefits are attained by doing various exercises and meditation. Yoga is now universally recognized as a powerful alternative branch of medicine. The sole reason for this is that Yoga has no side effects whatsoever.¹⁶ It is perhaps the only medicine whose results are long-lasting and does not lead to any further complications or new diseases which generally happen in case of the orally-administered medicines. If described in other terms, “Yoga is a healing system of theory and practice.” It is a combination of breathing exercises, physical postures and meditation which just needs to be practiced.¹⁷

TEN GOOD REASONS TO PRACTICE YOGA ^{18,19}

1. Yoga is not just for athletes, popstars and supermodels! Yoga is for everyone: young or old, male or female, healthy or sick. Yoga can always be adapted to your individual needs, whatever your circumstances.
2. Even if you are facing many challenges in life, it is easy to start doing yoga and you will experience instant benefits, such as stress-relief. Furthermore, once you begin to practice regularly, yoga will help you to live your life with renewed positivity and enthusiasm.
3. Yoga is safe. Where other forms of exercise might put a strain on your heart, muscles and joints, yoga, practiced properly (with awareness to your physical limitations), is a completely harmless form of exercise.
4. Yoga needs no special equipment. While there are a few props that might make your practice more comfortable, the only thing you need in order to do yoga is you.
5. Yoga both tones the respiratory system and helps you to breathe more fully, deeply and easily (thus increasing your oxygen intake), which in turn, will improve your physical and mental well-being.
6. Yoga improves the efficiency of your body systems, aiding digestion, the assimilation of nutrients and the elimination of toxins.
7. Yoga improves the quality of your sleep so that, when you wake up, you feel refreshed and full of vitality.
8. Yoga gives energy and helps you to channel your energy effectively so that you don't waste it on tension, stress and negativity.
9. Through practicing yoga techniques, you experience a genuine sense of outward tranquility, which eventually helps you achieve a deep state of inner peace, too.
10. Yoga is FUN.

ASANAS ACCORDING TO DISEASE²⁰

DISEASE	POSTURE	ASANAS
Arterial hypertension	Supine Poses	Shavasana, Uttan Tadasana,
Burns excess fat	Supine Poses	Ardha Halasana, Chakrasana
	Sitting Poses	Parvat Trikonasana, Ardha Matsyendrasana, Paschimottanasana
Nervous weakness	Supine Poses	Uttan Padasana
	Sitting Poses	Sukhasana
Indigestion	Supine Poses	Utthit Padmasana, Katichalana
	Sitting Poses	Vajrasana, Mandukasana
Diabetes	Supine Poses	Utthit Padmasana, Halasana, Skandha Katiasana, Chakrasana
	Prone Poses	Shalabhasana, Dhanurasana
	Sitting Poses	Ardha Matsyendrasana, Mandukasana, Paschimottanasana, Mayurasana
Bronchitis	Supine Poses	Sarvangasana, Uttan Tadasana
	Prone Poses	Bhujangasana
Bronchial asthma	Supine Poses	Matsyasana, Halasana, Skandha Katiasana, Chakrasana, Shavasana
	Prone Poses	Bhujangasana
	Sitting Poses	Paschimottanasana, utthitpadmasana , Gomukhasana, Shashankasana
Congestion	Supine Poses	Matsyasana
Myopia	Sitting Poses	Eye care
Menstrual Disorders	Supine Poses	Halasana
	Prone Poses	Dhanurasana
Abdomen & buttocks	Supine Poses	Ardha Pavan Muktasana
	Sitting Poses	Mayurasana
Arthritis	Supine Poses	setubandhasana, Skandha Katiasana, Uttan Tadasana, Katichalana
	Prone Poses	Shalabhasana
	Sitting Poses	Shashankasana
Heart Disease	Supine Poses	Uttan Tadasana, Shavasana, Uttan Padasana,
	Prone Poses	Shalabhasana, Bhujangasana
Knee, Ankle joint pain	Sitting Poses	Parvatasana
Asinophilla	Prone Poses	Bhujangasana
Lumbar Pain	Prone Pose	Amila Sulabhasana
Rheumatism	Prone Poses	Shalabhasana, Bhujangasana
	Sitting Poses	Paschimottanasana
Mental disorders	Prone Pose	Makarasana
Cervical spondylitis	Prone Poses	Bhujangasana
Genital disease	Sitting Poses	Utthit Padmasana

Enlarged & congested liver & inactive kidney	Sitting Poses	Vakrasana
Urinary disorders	Sitting Poses	Ardha Matsyendrasana
High Blood Pressure	Sitting Poses	Paschimottanasana, Shashankasana,
	Supine Poses	Matsyasana, Shavasana
Low Blood Pressure	Supine Poses	Pavan Muktasana, Matsyasana, Shavasana
	Sitting Poses	Paschimottanasana,
Acidity	Sitting Poses	Paschimottanasana,
	Supine Poses	Pavan Muktasana, Sarvangasana
Appendicitis	Sitting Poses	Paschimottanasana, Shashankasana
	Supine Poses	Sarvangasana, Matsyasana
Pyorrhoea	Sitting Poses	Simhasana
	Supine Poses	Matsyasana

Table 3: Asanas According To Disease

YOGA POSES & YOGA EXERCISES ²¹

Each asana helps you become more aware of your body, mind, and environment. While beginning your yoga exercises, experiment with the poses, moving in and out as you feel comfortable. If you approach the poses with playful curiosity, feeling of frustration and competitiveness will not enter your mind. While practicing your yoga exercises, make sure that you don't feel any discomfort or pain.

YOGA POSES AND BREATHING ²²

Breathing is an essential part of practicing yoga exercises. You should never hold your breathe during a pose. Also make sure that your breath is never forced or strained. Labored breathing is sign that you are working too hard and should come out of the pose slightly. When one starts practicing yoga, one can hold for three full breaths through most **yoga poses**. If you feel comfortable in the pose, hold for longer, if uncomfortable, you should come out of the pose immediately.

TYPES OF YOGA POSES ^{23, 24, 25, 26}

Seated poses: Seated poses are useful for practicing breathing exercises and relaxation or meditation techniques. Seated poses are also often used as a warm up or as a starting point for other poses. Performing seated poses can help improve your posture and open your hips.



Figure 2: Seated pose

Standing poses: Standing poses are often used as warm up or as a starting point for other poses. Standing poses are beneficial for strengthening your legs, opening your hips and improving your sense of balance.



Figure 3: Standing pose

Inversions: Inversions are excellent poses to perform to improve your blood circulation, quiet your mind and improve your overall health. Inversions are also believed to reverse the ageing process and reduce the effect of the gravity on your body.

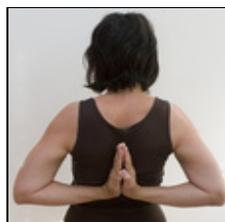


Figure 3: Inversions pose

Relaxation and restorative poses: It is important to take time to perform relaxation or restorative poses at the end of each yoga practice. You can use this time to relax your body and mind and allow energy released by the poses in your practice to move freely throughout your body.

Counter poses: A counter pose is a **yoga pose** that stretches your spine in the opposite direction from a previous pose or returns your spine to a neutral position.

Twists: You can perform twists to stretch and strengthen your back and abdominal muscles, increase the flexibility of your spine and improve your circulation. Twists improve the functioning of your internal organs by providing them with a fresh supply of blood as you twist and release your body.



Figure 4: Twists pose

Balancing poses: Balancing poses are great for improving your balance and coordination as well as developing your ability to remain grounded in a pose. Keeping your body balanced encourages you to focus, quiet and balance your mind.

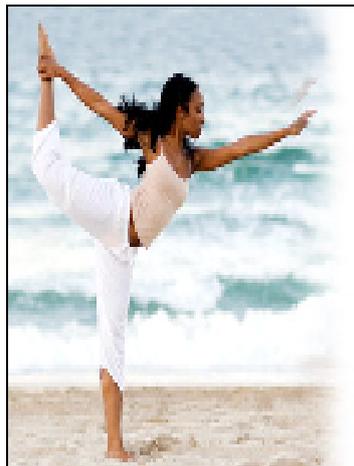


Figure 5: Balancing pose

Forward bends: Forward bends stretch the entire back of your body, especially your hamstrings. Forward bends are also often used to release tension, calm your mind and soothe your nervous system. Similar to back bends, forward bends help keep your spine strong and supple.

Back bends: Back bends are among the most challenging **poses in yoga**. Bending backward helps strength your back and keep your spine strong and supple. Back bends also open the front of your body, especially your chest.

HOW TO PRACTICE YOGA POSES OR ASANAS ²⁷

Yoga postures are designed to cleanse tone and purify the body, which in turn affects the mind and your ability to practice pranayama and meditation without distraction. Not to mention of the other many health benefits like:

- Improved flexibility, stamina, strength and balance.
- Better functioning of your nervous and endocrine systems and internal organ.
- Enhanced quality of your breathing.

TIPS TO FOLLOW WHEN PRACTICING YOGA POSES ^{28,29}

- Choose poses that seem appropriate to your mood and energy level.
- Begin with gentler poses and work up to stronger ones.
- Breathe evenly through the nose throughout the postures.
- Never rush into and out of a pose.
- Never strain in a pose - if it hurts, stop.
- Don't habitually practise in front of a mirror. Focus on how the pose feels, not what it looks like.
- The postures should be both steady and soft

BENEFITS OF YOGA

Physical Benefits

Yoga has both its preventive and therapeutic cures over ailing mind and body. Yoga improves all the problems associated with the body, like:

- increases flexibility in muscles and various muscular joints,
- strengthens the spinal cord,
- recovers back aches,
- improves muscular skeletal conditions, digestion and elimination,
- stimulates glands and endocrinal system,
- improves heart condition,
- proper blood circulation,
- recovers breathing disorder,
- boosts immune response,
- decreases cholesterol, diabetes,
- maintains blood pressure level,
- increases the stamina and
- Maintains a balance and grace all over. ³⁰

Conclusion

Thus we find that the methods of treatment are based on simple and natural principles. To conclude we can say that, Ayurveda and Yoga teaches a very systematic and scientific way of life which is important to pursue both materially and spiritually. Fundamental principles, health rules, knowledge of individual constitution of our body, use of various herbs, minerals and specially Panch Karma therapy and Asanas can be very safely used by one and all, all over the world to, promote good health, prevent diseases and acquire longevity.

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