

# Yoga for Healthy Living

In Sanskrit the word for health is "Swasthya" which has a profound meaning. It is made of two root Sanskrit words – "Swa" or the Self and "Stha" meaning centered. So Swasthya can be roughly translated as "Centered in one's own Self". In the Indian System, the Self is described as Sat-Chit-Ananda or Being-Consciousness-Bliss. This is the true nature of every being. Any deviation from this state of well-being can be considered as a disease.

The ancient Rishis realized that to attain the higher states of consciousness, a healthy body and mind is a must. Maharishi Patanjali describes "Vyadhi" or disease as one of the nine obstacles to the attainment of higher consciousness. But he also says that these diseases and even diseases that may manifest in the future can be eliminated by yogic practices. Yoga has placed great importance to the preservation of body health and its methods can be considered a system of medicine in itself.

The first two parts of Yoga, namely [Yama](#) and [Niyama](#) are aimed at the external and internal harmony of an individual. Values such as truth, non-violence, non-stealing, cleanliness and contentment bring about harmony in the society as well as well-being in the life of an individual. Deviation from these values can cause stress and strain in life.

The vital energy in the body is called Prana. It is prana which maintains the physiology of the body. It is Prana that runs our digestive, cardiac and nervous systems. All activities in the body are controlled by prana. Prana flows in the body through channels called nadis. When there is block in the nadis, the flow becomes imbalanced and can lead to physical disorders. Asanas and pranayama help to balance the prana in the body and to remove the blocks, thereby improving the functioning of all the systems.

Yoga can make the breathing slower and deeper, improving the capacity of the lungs and reducing the blood pressure. Yoga is known to reduce cholesterol and the sugar levels in diabetic patients, reducing the risks of heart attacks, kidney failures and blindness.

[Pranayama](#) and Meditation can calm the mind and remove stress and anxiety. It improves mental health leading to a greater peace and stability of the mind, experienced as a sense of constant well-being. Meditation induces the calmer alpha waves in the brain, which is usually experienced during deep relaxation, and can in turn improve memory, physical coordination and mental clarity.

Meditation can increase awareness and helps in dealing with the negativities of the mind like anger and frustration. This improves the social well-being, improves relationships and makes one strong enough to face all situations in life in a composed way.

[Asanas](#) bring about flexibility, strength and balance in the body. It tones the internal organs, improves blood circulation and removes toxins from the system. Yoga has the ability to regenerate the body tissues and reverse the aging process. It is good for flexibility of the spine and joints making the body feel younger. It can correct wrong postures and remove defects caused by improper work habits.

Benefits of Yoga are endless. A few more are mentioned below.

- Yoga can help in alleviating life style disorders like insomnia, hypertension, obesity, anxiety, stress, diabetes, high blood pressure, etc.
- Yoga is known to help relieve depression and reduce the dependence on psychiatric drugs.
- Yoga helps in pain management of arthritis, back pain, fibromyalgia and general muscle stiffness.
- Yoga can improve the functioning of the lymphatic system, thereby, strengthening the immune system.
- Many of the *Asanas* and especially the [Shatkarmas](#) (like [Neti](#), [Nauli](#), [Basti](#), etc.) work as effective detox methods to remove toxins from the body. They can help in eliminating sinusitis, constipation, acidity, heartburns, migraine and prevent diseases which may manifest in the future.

Thus, even though Yoga was developed as a spiritual science, today it is more used as a self-healing system to maintain a healthy body and mind.