

YOGA

for LACTATING MOTHERS

Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India,
in collaboration with Ministry of AYUSH, Government of India



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Preamble:

Woman plays a major role in shaping the family, society, nation and world as a whole. Health of women is important as they have several responsibilities both at social and domestic fronts. Women are backbone of the social structure that support the society with different aspects of their existence and relation. They are considered as half part of the universal energy which sustains growth and development in the life. She has to take multiple decisions in the kitchen, home, office, thus the health of a woman is of prime consideration. Lifestyle of a family, partially or totally, is dependent upon her, being a mother. When women are in healthy and sound conditions, it facilitates to achieve larger and broader perspective of health and happiness within the society.

In 'Rigveda' there is quote that indicates the place of women in Indian culture. "Yatranaryastupoojyanteramantetatradevatah", which broadly translates as – "The God lives there where women are worshipped". Thus in this way, they are given not only importance and but equal position with men.

Mothers' milk is always the best food to meet all the nutritional needs of a baby. It contains all necessary protective substances that can protect a baby from different infectious diseases. Breast feeding has a unique emotional bond which creates inner relationship between mother and child which is very important for the mental and physical development of a child. There are a lot of benefits of breastfeeding; in addition to maternal and infant health aspect, breastfeeding is also beneficial in social, cultural, economic, and educational aspects. After childbirth they are more responsible as they are not only a wife but also a mother. Women often focus on health care of family and generally neglect their own health. Therefore, special care to maintain good health of a lactating woman is crucial.

Objectives of Yoga for Pregnancy

Yoga is easy to be done by lactating mothers because it does not require expensive cost, can be done at home and can provide relaxation for mothers. Yoga in lactating mothers is useful to facilitate the production of breast milk because Yoga movements can stimulate the pituitary gland to stimulate an increase in prolactin hormone to produce more breast milk and can simultaneously meet the nutritional needs of infants.

Therefore, keeping the role which Yoga plays in lactating mother the following objectives are enlisted to come up with this booklet.

1. To bring easy and cost effective drugless modalities to take care health of lactating mother.
2. To prepare practices in Yoga which plays very vital role to address specific concern of lactating mother.
3. To spread awareness among breast-feeding women about health and its care through Yoga.
4. To promote and disseminate the knowledge and understating among women about our ancient health care system through practical practices of Yoga with due care.
5. To explain the mechanism involved in yogic practices and how they provide benefits if practiced regularly.

Need and Purpose of the Booklet:

After child birth a woman neglects her health and is involved in nursing and care taking of her newborn. This leads to lack of proper sleep and nutrition and she develops postpartum depression. A 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 her part. She stores up all stress and tension which in later days bursts out in form of serious health problems. Women experience more episodes of illness than men due multidimensional changes in their life. Especially, the poor women are trapped in vicious cycle of ill-health, exacerbated by child bearing and hard physical labor. Women's health is bound up with social, cultural and economic factor that influence all aspect of their lives and consequences are borne by women themselves. During pregnancy, the women undergo constant changes and this continues after the delivery for some time. Women after childbirth face many physical, mental and emotional problems which lead to physical weakness, mental worries, depression, anxiety, malnutrition etc.

To address and resolve the concerns related to a lactating mother, there is a need to prepare this Yoga booklet. The main Yoga exercises for lactating mothers are for those area related to around the breasts; the movement for breast exercise is more powerful when done on the basis of complete respiration. It is the need of today to offer those practices in Yoga which are easy for lactating mother to practice. In current scenario there is no such specific package or list of yogic practices available to care such concern of mothers, so this Yoga booklet is needed by the society. It is expected that this attempt carried out here will play a vital role to facilitate the Yoga practices and develop confidence among lactating mother to overcome all health hazards occurring after child birth through yogic practices.

Principles of Yoga Practices in Lactating Women

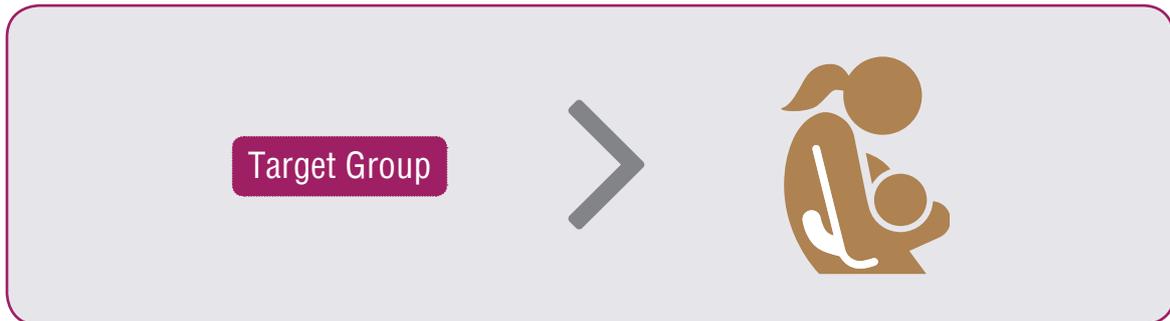
There are several ways to increase milk production, one of which is by doing Yoga exercise. Yoga is a unique combination of useful movements to improve physical health and way of breathing and meditation that can provide peace of mind.

According to Yoga exercises for breast feeding mothers include:

- 1) Sukshma Vyayama Kriya; This has benefits to improve blood circulation around the breasts, strengthen the supporting muscles of breasts, strengthen the supporting muscles for respiration, and open the chest cavity in all directions.
- 2) Asana; These practices focuses on stretching particular body parts and helps blood flow and stimulates hormonal glands (endocrine) in the body. Most importantly, Asana Yoga is useful to strengthen and purify the nervous system, especially the spine, so it will be able to improve health and sense of wellbeing not only in the body but also the mind and emotions.
- 3) Pranayama; Pranayama practices synchronize the flow of energy all over the body. Breathing practices are very vital as they will maximize the capacity of the lungs during breathing and keep the air flow in the body running smoothly, so this can improve the strength and malleability of the body, relieve tension, increase the peace and generate new energy.
- 4) Relaxation; The relaxation phase is useful to raise self-awareness. While doing one of the postures in shavasana relaxation, the gently pressed glands while doing asana will produce its hormones more stably, blood circulation flows more smoothly, the body will break down its muscle tension, the mind will become calmer, and the feeling will become more peaceful.
- 5) Meditation; It is a state where "the body is still and quiet with total conscious mind of being here, now. The effects obtained from meditation are senses of calmness, peacefulness, safety, comfort, serenity, resignation, and acceptance of what is available.

Target Group:

There are several ways to increase milk production, one of which is by doing Yoga exercise and having yogic diet. For the normal delivery Yoga practices are recommended after one month but for a caesarian cases Yoga practices are recommended after three months. Breathing practices shall be started immediately after delivery. Keeping in the mind all the concerns mothers face after child birth, yogic practices, diet, cautions and precautions etc. have been included in this booklet



General Guidelines Before the Practice

- ➔ Śauca means cleanliness - an important prerequisite for Yogic practice. It includes cleanliness of surroundings, body and mind
- ➔ Yogic practice should be performed in a calm and quiet atmosphere with a relaxed body and mind
- ➔ Yogic practice should be done on an empty stomach or light stomach. Consume small amount of honey in lukewarm water if you feel weak
- ➔ Bladder and bowels should be empty before starting Yogic practices
- ➔ A mattress, Yoga mat or folded blanket should be used for the practice
- ➔ Light and comfortable cotton clothes are preferred to facilitate easy movement of the body
- ➔ Yoga should not be performed in state of exhaustion, illness, in a hurry or in acute stress conditions
- ➔ In case of chronic disease/ pain/ cardiac problems, a physician or a Yoga therapist should be consulted prior to performing Yogic practices
- ➔ Yoga experts should be consulted before doing Yogic practices during pregnancy and menstruation

During the Practice

- ➔ Practice sessions should start with a prayer or invocation as it creates a conducive environment to relax the mind
- ➔ Yogic practices shall be performed slowly, in a relaxed manner, with awareness of the body and breath

- Do not hold the breath unless it is specially mentioned to do so during the practice
- Breathing should be always through the nostrils unless instructed otherwise
- Do not hold body tightly, or jerk the body at any point of time
- Perform the practices according to your own capacity
- It takes some time to get good results, so persistent and regular practice is very essential
- There are contra-indications/ limitations for each Yoga practice and such contra-indications should always be kept in mind
- Yoga session should be concluded with meditation/ deep silence / Śhāntipatha

After the Practice

- Bath may be taken only after 20-30 minutes of practice
- Food may be consumed only after 30-45 minutes of practice

Specific Guidelines

- Lactating women should have very nutritious, balanced and Sattvika diet. The following points should be kept in mind:
- Essential nutritional supplement for mother
- Essential nutrition for nursing child
- Lactating women should protect themselves from excessive stress
- Take leisure walk for half an hour every day after having dinner
- The modifications in yoga practices should be done according to the specific needs of the lactating woman, in order to prevent overexertion and stress
- Progressively one should go in yoga practices
- All yoga practices should be done under guidance of Yoga expert

Recommended Protocol for Lactating Women

S. NO.	YOGA PRACTICES	ROUNDS	DURATION
1.	PRAYER		1 Minute
2.	YOGIC SUKSHMA VYAYAMA: (Micro Circulation Practices)		8 Minutes
	Neck Movements:		
	- Forward and Backward bending	3 Rounds	
	- Right and Left bending	3 Rounds	
	- Right and Left Twisting	3 Rounds	
	- Neck Rotation (Clockwise & Anti clockwise)	3 Rounds	
	Shoulder Movements		
	- Shoulder Stretch	3 Rounds	
	- Shoulder Rotation (Forward & Backward)	3 Rounds	
	Knee Movement	5 Rounds	
	Ankle Movement		
	- Ankle Rotation (Clockwise & Anti clockwise)	5 Rounds each	
	- Ankle Stretch		
3.	YOGASANAS		10 Minutes
	STANDING POSTURES		
	- Tadasana		
	- ArdhaChakrasana		
	- Padhastasana		
	- Trikonasana		
	SITTING POSTURES		
	- Bhadarasana		
	- Marjariasana		
	- ArdhaUshtrasana		
	- Shashankasana		
	PRONE POSTURES		
	- SaralBhujangasana		
	- ArdhaShalabhasana		
	- Makrasana		
	SUPINE POSTURES		
	- Ek Pad Pawanmuktasana		
	- Setubandhasana		
	- SaralMatsyasana		
	- Ek Pad Uttanpadasana		
	- Shavasana		
4.	BREATHING PRACTICES - Sectional Breathing: Abdominal, Thoracic and Clavicular breathing	5 rounds	20 Minutes
5.	PRANAYAMA:		
	- Nadi Sodhana Pranayama	5 Rounds	
	- Ujjai Pranayama	5 Rounds	
	- Bhramari Pranayama	5 Rounds	
6.	DHYANA		5 Minutes
7.	SHANTI PATHA		1 Minute
	TOTAL TIME		45 Minutes

Yoga Practices for Lactating Mothers

1. PRAYER

Yogic Practice shall start with a prayer or prayerful mood to enhance the benefits of practice.

OM SAHANA VAVATU SAHANA BHUNATTU

SAHA VIRYAM KARAWAVAHAI

TEJASVINAVADITAMASTU

MA VIDVISHAVAHAI

OM SHANTI SHANTI OM

Together may we be protected

Together may we be nourished

Together may we work with great energy

May our journey together be brilliant and effective

May there be no bad feelings between us

Peace, peace, peace



2. YOGIC SUKSHMA VYAYAMA/LOOSENING PRACTICES

The CālanaKriyās/loosening practices/Yogic SūksmaVyāyāmas help to increase microcirculation. These practices can be done while standing or sitting.

I. NECK BENDING

Sthiti: Samasthiti(Alert Posture)

Technique

STAGE I: (Forward and Backward Bending)



1. Stand with the feet comfortably apart.
2. Keep the hands straight beside the body, this is Samasthiti. This is also called Tādāsana.
3. Keep your arms on the waist. While
4. exhaling, move the head forward slowly and
5. While inhaling, move the head as far back
5. Repeat 2 more rounds.

STAGE - II : (Right and Left bending)



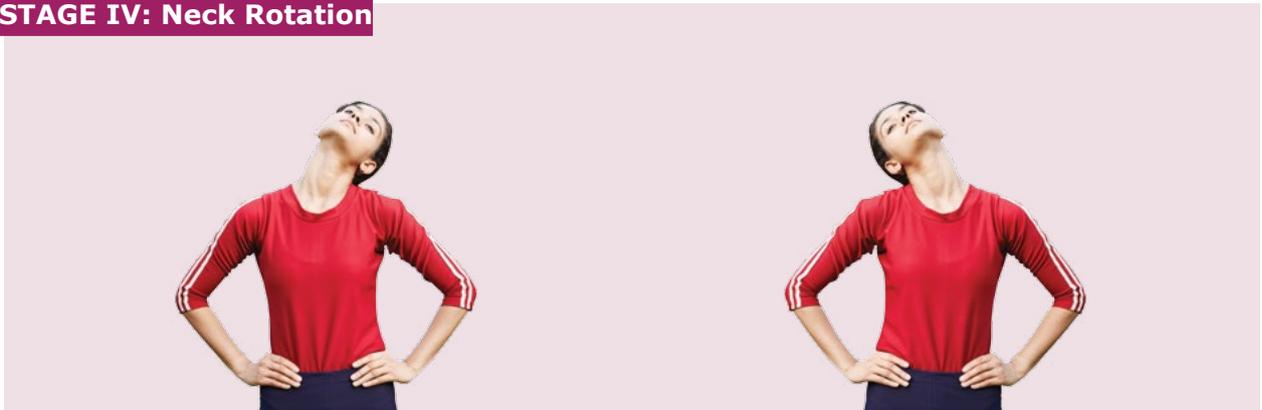
1. While exhaling, bend the head slowly to the right; bring the ear as close as possible to the shoulder without raising the shoulder.
2. While inhaling, bring the head to the normal position.
3. Similarly, while exhaling bend the head to the left side. Inhale and bring the head up to normal position. this is one round:
4. Repeat 2 more rounds.

STAGE - III : (Right and Left Twisting)



1. Keep the head upright.
2. While exhaling, gently turn the head to the right so that the chin is in line with the shoulder.
3. While inhaling, bring the head to the normal position.
4. Similarly, while exhaling, turn the head to the left.
5. Inhale and bring the head to the normal position. This is one round:
6. Repeat 2 more rounds.

STAGE IV: Neck Rotation



1. Exhale; bend the head forward trying to touch the chin to the chest. Inhale; slowly rotate the head clockwise in a circular motion, exhale while coming down. Do complete rotation.
2. Then rotate the head in an anti-clockwise direction.
3. Inhale; go back and exhale, come down. This is one round:
4. Repeat 2 more rounds.



Note:

Move the head as far as possible. Do not over strain. Keep the shoulders relaxed and steady. Feel the stretch around the neck and loosening up of the joints and muscles of the neck. This can be practiced sitting on a chair. People with neck pain can do the practice gently especially when taking the head back to the extent it is comfortable. Elderly people and persons with cervical spondylitis, high blood pressure may avoid these practices.

II. SHOULDER'S MOVEMENT

Sthiti: Samasthiti (Alert Posture)

Technique:

STAGE I: Shoulder's Stretch



1. Keep feet together and the body straight, arms by the sides.
2. Raise both your arms sideways above your head with the palm outward.
3. Bring them down in the same manner.
4. The arms must not touch the head when going up or the thighs when coming down.
5. Palms must be opened, with fingers together.

STAGE II: SkandhaCakra (shoulder Rotation)



1. Stand erect. Place the fingers of left hand on the left shoulder and the fingers of right hand on the right shoulder.
2. Rotate of the both elbows in a circular manner.
3. Try to touch the elbows in front of the chest on the forward movement and touch the ears while moving up.
4. Stretch the arm back in the backward movement and touch the side of the trunk while coming down. It is the clockwise rotation and repeat it for 5 times.
5. Do the same anti-clockwise.



Benefits:

1. Practice of this Yogic kriyā makes the bones, muscles and nerves of the shoulder region healthy.
2. These practices are helpful in cervical spondylitis and frozen shoulder.

III. CHEST MOVEMENT

Sthiti :samasthiti

Technique

1. Stretch your arms in front at the level of your shoulder While inhaling through the nose, bend backward from the waist as far as you can go.
2. At the same time raise your arms behind you as high as you can.
3. Maintaining this posture as long as you can exhale slowly while resuming your original position.
4. Do this five times to begin with.



Benefits:

1. Practice of this kriyā makes the bones, muscles and nerves of the shoulder region healthy.
2. These practices are helpful in cervical spondylitis and frozen shoulder.



IV. TRUNK TWISTING (KATISHAKTI VIKĀSAKA)

Sthiti: Samasthiti (Alert Posture)



Technique

1. Raise both the arms up to chest level with palms facing each other and keep them parallel.
2. While exhaling, twist the body towards the left side so that the right palm touches the left shoulder and come back with inhalation.
3. While exhaling, twist the body towards the right side so that the left palm touches the right shoulder, then come back with inhalation.
4. This is one round: repeat it two more times.
5. Relax in Samasthiti.



Note:

1. Do it slowly with normal breathing.
2. Cardiac patients shall do with care.
3. Avoid this practice in case of severe back pain, vertebral and disc disorders, after abdominal surgery and during menstruation.

V. KNEE MOVEMENT

Sthiti: SamaSthiti(Alert Posture)

Technique

1. Inhale; lift your arms up at the shoulder level, palms facing downwards.
2. Exhale; bend the knees and bring down your body to the squatting position.
3. In the final position, both the arms and thighs should be parallel to the ground.
4. Inhale; and straighten the body.
5. Exhale while bringing down the hands.
6. Repeat two more times.



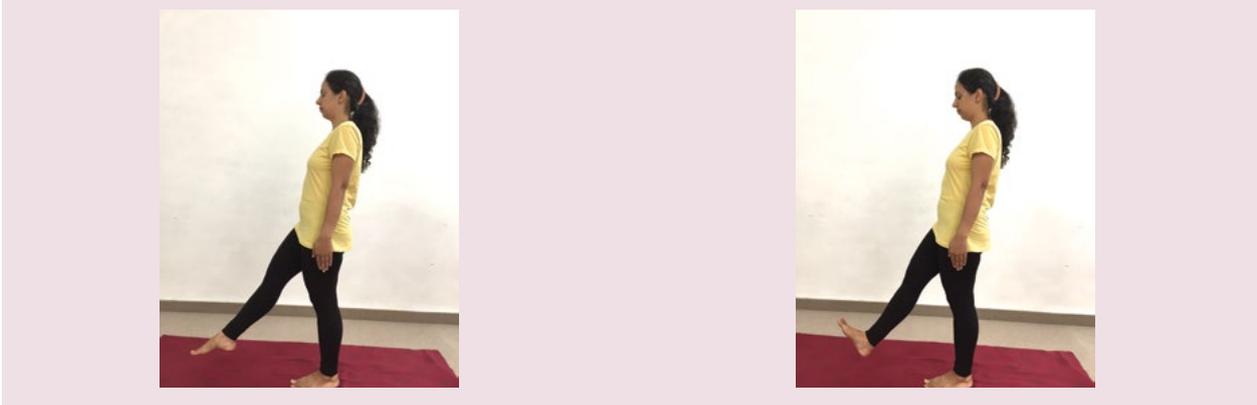
Note:

1. It strengthens knees and hips joint.
2. Avoid this asana in case of acute conditions of arthritis.

VI. ANKLE MOVEMENT

Ankle Rotation (GulphapādaprayastapādatālaśaktiVikāsaka)

Sthiti: SamaSthiti (Alert Posture)



Technique

1. With the feet together, stand erect.
2. Stretching forward one foot and holding it about 9 inches off the ground, and circle
3. first from right to left, then from left to right, with the ankle.
4. Repeat with the other foot.
5. Repeat two more times.



Note:

1. The exercise relieves rheumatism of the ankles and strengthens the toes and the feet. Avoid this asana in case of acute conditions of arthritis.
2. Avoid this asana in case of acute conditions of arthritis.

3. YOGĀSANAS

A. STANDING POSTURES

TĀDĀSANA (Palm Tree Posture)

Tāda means palm tree or mountain. This asana teaches one to attain stability and firmness and forms the base for all the standing asana.

Technique

1. Stand with feet 2 inches apart.
2. Interlock the fingers, and turn the wrist outwards.
3. Now inhale, raise the arms up. Bring them in line with the shoulders.
4. Raise the heels off the floor and balance on the toes. Stay in this position for 10-15 seconds. Exhale, bring the heels down.
5. Release the interlock of the fingers and bring the arms down parallel to the trunk, and come back to standing posture.



Benefits

1. This asana brings stability in the body, helps to clear up congestion of the spinal nerves, and corrects faulty posture.
2. Helps to increase height up to a certain age.

A word of caution

1. Avoid lifting the toes in case of acute cardiac problems, varicose veins, and vertigo.

ARDHA CAKRĀSANA (The Half Wheel Posture)

Ardha means half. Cakra means wheel. In this posture, as the body takes the shape of a half wheel, hence it is called ArdhaCakrāsana.

Technique

1. Support the back at the waist with all the fingers together pointing forward or downward.
2. Drop the head backwards stretching the neck muscles.
3. As you inhale, bend backwards from the lumbar region; exhale and relax.
4. Stay here for 10-30 seconds with normal breathing.
5. Inhale and slowly come up.



Benefits

1. ArdhaCakrāsana makes the spine flexible and strengthens the spinal nerves.
2. Strengthens the neck muscles, and improves breathing capacity.
3. Helps in cervical spondylitis.



Note:

1. Avoid this posture in case of vertigo or a tendency to giddiness.
2. Hypertensive patients shall bend with care.

PĀDA-HASTĀSANA (The Hands to Feet Posture)

Pāda means feet, hasta means hands. Therefore, PādaHastāsana means keeping the palms down towards the feet. This is also referred as Uttānāsana.

Technique

1. Stand straight with feet 2 inches apart.
2. Inhale slowly and raise the arms up.
3. Stretch up the body from the waist.
4. Exhale and bend forward and try to touch the heels.
5. Maintain this final posture for 10-30 seconds with normal breathing.
6. Those who are suffering with stiff back should bend according to their capacity.
7. Now inhale, come up slowly to the upright position and stretch the
8. arms straight above the head.
9. Exhale, slowly return to the starting position in the reverse order.
10. Relax in Samasthiti.



Benefits

1. Makes the spine flexible, improves digestion, prevents constipation and menstrual problems.



Note:

1. Please avoid this practice in case of cardiac disorders, vertebral and disc disorders, abdominal inflammation, hernia and ulcers, glucoma, myopia, vertigo and during pregnancy.

TRIKONĀSANA (The Triangle Posture)

Trikonameans triangle. Tri means three and kona is an angle. As theāsana resembles three arms triangles made by the trunk and thelimbs, it has been named Trikonāsana.

Technique

1. Stand on your feet comfortably apart.
2. Slowly raise both the arms sideways till they are horizontal.
3. Exhale, slowly bend to the right side and place the right hand just behind the right foot.
4. The left arm is straight up, in line with the right arm.
5. Turn the left palm forward.
6. Turn your head and gaze at the tip of the left middle finger.
7. Remain in the posture for 10-30 seconds with normal breathing.
8. As you inhale slowly come up.
9. Repeat for the left side.



Benefits

1. Prevents flat foot.
2. Strengthens calf, thigh and waist muscles.
3. Makes the spine flexible, improves lungs capacity.



Note:

1. Avoid this posture in case of slipped disc, sciatica, and after undergoing abdominal surgery. Do not do beyond limits and over do the lateral stretch. If one cannot touch the feet, one can reach for the knees instead.

SITTING ASANA

BHADRĀSANA (The Firm/Auspicious Posture)

➔ Bhadr means 'firm' or 'auspicious'.

Sthiti: Long sitting posture (Viśrāmāsana) Sit erect with both the legs stretched forward.

Support the back with hands. Body should be relaxed totally.

This is Viśrāmāsana.

Technique

1. Sit erect with the legs stretched out straight in the front.
2. Keep the hands beside the hips and palms resting on the floor. This is Dandāsana.
3. Now put the soles of your feet together.
4. Exhale and clasp your hands together over your toes.
5. Inhale, pull your heels as close as possible up to perineum region. If your thighs are not touching or are not close to the floor, place a soft cushion underneath the knees for support. This is the final position.
6. Stay in this position for sometime with normal breathing.



Benefits

1. Helps to keep the body firm and stabilize the mind.
2. Keep the knees and hip joints healthy. Beneficial for pregnant woman.
3. Acts on the abdominal organs and releases any tension in the abdomen.
4. Benefits women by relieving abdominal pain often experienced during menstruation



Note:

1. Avoid this practice in case of severe arthritis and sciatica.

MARJARIASANA

'Marjari' means 'Cat' and 'asana' means 'pose' so it is called **Marjariasana (cat pose)**.



Technique

1. Sit in Vajrasana, stand on the knees.
2. Lean forward and place the hands flat on the floor with palms down and fingers facing the forward direction.
3. Keep the arms and thighs perpendicular to the floor.
4. Inhale raise the head up and keep the spine in concave shape.
5. While exhaling lower the head and make spine convex by contracting abdomen and pulling the buttocks.
6. Relax and practice again.



Benefits

1. This asana strengthens the core muscles gently in pregnant women.
2. In post pregnancy it helps to tone up reproductive organs

ARDHA USTRĀSANA (The Half Camel Posture)

BHADRĀSANA (The Firm/Auspicious Posture)

Sthiti: Long sitting posture (Viśrāmāsana) Ustrā means camel. The final version of this āsana resembles the hump of a camel. In this version, only the first stage (half) of the āsana is being practiced.

Technique

1. Sit in Viśrāmāsana. Come to Dandāsana.
2. Fold your legs and sit in Vajrāsana.
3. Stand on your knees. Place the hands on the hips with
4. fingers pointing downwards.
5. Keep the elbows and shoulders parallel.
6. Bend the head back and stretch the neck muscles; inhale and bend the trunk backwards as much as possible.
7. Now exhale and relax. Keep the thighs perpendicular to the ground. Remain in the posture for 10-30 seconds with normal breathing.
8. Return with inhalation; sit in Vajrāsana.
9. Relax in Viśrāmāsana.



Benefits

1. It helps to strengthen back and neck muscles.
2. Relieves constipation and back pain.



Note:

1. In case of hernia and abdominal injuries, arthritis and vertigo please avoid doing this āsana.

ŚAŚAKĀSANA (The Hare Posture)

Śaśakameans hare.

Sthiti: Vajrāsana

Technique

1. Sit in Vajrāsana.
2. Spread both the knees wide apart, keep the big toes touching.
3. Keep the palms between the knees.
4. Exhale and slowly stretch them to full length.
5. Bend forward and place the chin on the ground.
6. Keep the arms parallel, look in front and maintain the posture.
7. Inhale and come up.
8. Exhale and come back to Vajrāsana.
9. Stretch your legs back to Viśrāmāsan



Benefits

1. It helps to reduce stress, anger etc.
2. It tones up reproductive organs, relieves constipation, improves digestion and relieves back pain.



Note:

1. Please avoid this posture in case of acute backache.
2. Patients with osteoarthritis of the knees should exercise with caution or avoid Vajrāsana.
3. High blood pressure patients should not perform this practice.

SARAL BHUJANGĀSANA (The Cobra Posture)

Bhujangameans snake or cobra. In this āsana, the body is raised like the hood of a snake.

Stithi: Prone posture or Makarāsana

Technique

1. Lie down on your stomach, rest your head on your hands and relax the body.
2. Now join your legs and stretch your arms.
3. Keep the forehead on the ground.
4. Now place your hands just beside the body; keep palms and elbows on the ground.
5. As you inhale slowly, lift the chin and chest come up to navel region.
6. Stay there comfortably.
7. This is called SaralaBhujangāsana.



Benefits

1. This āsanais best for stress management.
2. It reduces abdominal fat and alleviates constipation.
3. It also helps to remove backache and bronchial problems.



Note:

1. Keep the legs firm so that no load or strain is felt on the lumbar spine.
2. Those who have undergone abdominal surgery should avoid this asana for 2-3 months.
3. Those who suffer from hernia, ulcers should not practice this āsana.

ARDH ŚALABHĀSANA (The Locust Posture)

ArdhŚalabhameans a locust.

Sthiti: Prone posture Makarāsana

Technique

1. Lie down on your stomach in Makarāsana.
2. Rest the chin on the floor; keep both hands beside the body; palms facing upwards.
3. Inhale; raise one legs off the floor as much as you can without bending the knees
4. Exhale bring the leg down on the floor.
5. Now, repeat the same practice with the other leg.
6. Stay in this position for 10-20 seconds breathing normally.
7. Rest for a few seconds in Makarāsana.



Benefits

1. Helps in sciatica and lower backache.
2. Tones the hip muscles and reduces fat on the thighs and buttocks;



Note:

1. Cardiac patients should avoid this posture. Please proceed cautiously in case of sever lower back pain
2. People with high blood pressure, peptic ulcers and hernia should also avoid this posture.

MAKARĀSANA (The Crocodile Posture)

In Sanskrit, Makarameans crocodile. In this āsana, the body resembles a crocodile.

Sthiti: Prone relaxation posture

Technique

1. Lie down on your stomach with the feet wide apart, feet pointing outward.
2. Bend both the arms and place the right hand on the left hand.
3. Place the forehead on your hands.
4. Keep the eyes closed. This is Makarāsana.
5. This āsana is practiced for relaxation in all prone postures.



Benefits

1. Promotes relaxation of the lower back.
2. Indicated to counter stress and anxiety.



Note:

1. Avoid this practice in case of low blood pressure, severe cardiac problems and pregnancy.

EKPADPAVANAMUKTĀSANA (The Wind Releasing Posture)

Pavanameans wind and muktameans to release or to make free. As the name suggests, this asana is useful in removing wind or flatulence from the stomach and intestines.

Sthiti: Śavāsana

Technique

1. Lie down flat on the back.
2. Bend one knee and bring the thigh to the chest and keep other leg on the floor.
3. Interlock the fingers and clasp the shin below knees.
4. Exhale; raise the head till your chin touches the knees and relax.
5. Now repeat the same practice with other leg.
6. This is Ek Pad Pavanamuktāsana.
7. Bring the head back to the ground.
8. While exhaling, lower the legs to the floor.
9. Rest in Śavāsana



Benefits

1. Removes constipation; gives relief from flatulence, decreases the bloating sensation in the abdomen and aids digestion
2. Offers deep internal pressure, massage and stretching of the highly complicated network of muscles, ligaments and tendons in the pelvis and waist region.



Note:

1. Synchronise your breathing with the leg movement.
2. While touching the knee with the nose/ forehead, you should be able to feel the lumbar region stretch; keep the eyes closed and focus your attention on the lumbar region.
3. Please avoid this practice in case of abdominal injuries, hernia, sciatica or severe back pain and during pregnancy.

SETUBANDHĀSANA (The Bridge Posture)

Setubandhameans formation of bridge. In this posture, the body is positioned like a bridge, hence the name. This is also called as Catuspādāsana.

Sthiti: Supine lying Śavāsana.

Technique

1. Bend both the legs at the knees and bring the heels near the buttocks.
2. While holding both the ankles firmly keep the knees and feet in one straight line.
3. Inhale; slowly raise your buttocks and trunk up as much as you can to form bridge.
4. Remain in this position for 10-30 seconds, with normal breathing.
5. Exhale, slowly return to the original position and relax in Śavāsana.



Benefits

1. Relieves depression and anxiety and strengthens lower back muscles.
2. Stretches abdominal organs, improves digestion and helps to relieve constipation.

Note:

1. In the final position, the shoulders and the head remain in contact with the floor.
2. If required, in the final position, you can support your body at the waist with your hands.
3. People suffering from ulcers and hernia, and women in advanced stages of pregnancy should not practice this asana.

ŚAVĀSANA (The Dead Body Posture)

Sava means dead body. The final position in this asana resembles a dead body.

Sthiti: Supine Relaxation Posture

Technique

1. Lie down on your back with arms and legs comfortably apart.
2. Palms facing upward; eyes closed.
3. Relax the whole body consciously.
4. Become aware of natural breath and allow it to become rhythmic and slow.
5. Remain in the position till you feel refresh and relax.



Benefits

1. Helps to relieve all kinds of tensions and gives rest to both body and mind.
2. Relaxes the whole psycho-physiological system.
3. The mind, which is constantly attracted to the outer world, takes a U-turn and moves inwards, thus gradually getting absorbed; as the mind turns quiet and absorbed, the practitioner remains undisturbed by the external environment.
4. It is found very beneficial in the management of stress and its consequences.

4. BREATHING PRACTICES

Sectional Breathing:

Clavicular breathing:

Tāda means palm tree or mountain. This asana teaches one to attain stability and firmness and forms the base for all the standing asana.

Technique

1. Lie in shavasana and relax the whole body.
2. Perform thoracic breathing for a few minutes.
3. Inhale fully, and expand the rib cage.
4. When the ribs are fully expanded, inhale a little more until expansion is felt in the upper portion of the lungs around the base of the neck.
5. The shoulders and collar bone should also move up slightly.
6. This will take some effort. Exhale slowly, first releasing the lower neck and upper chest, then relax the rest of the rib cage back to its starting position.
7. Continue for a few more breaths, observing the effect of this type of breathing.



Thoracic breathing

Technique

1. Sit in a meditation posture or lie in shavasana and relax the whole body.
2. Maintain unbroken awareness of the natural breath for some time, concentrating on the sides of the chest.
3. Discontinue any further use of the diaphragm and begin to inhale by slowly expanding the rib cage.
4. Feel the movement of the individual ribs outward and upward, and be aware of this expansion drawing air into the lungs.
5. Expand the chest as much as possible.
6. Exhale by relaxing the chest muscles.
7. Feel the rib cage contracting and forcing the air out of the lungs.
8. Breathe slowly and deeply through the chest with total awareness.
9. Do not use the diaphragm.
10. Continue thoracic breathing for a few minutes, pausing slightly after each inhalation and exhalation.



Abdominal (or diaphragmatic) breathing

Technique

1. Lie in shavasana and relax the whole body.
2. Observe the spontaneous breath without controlling it in any way.
3. Let it be absolutely natural. Continue observing the natural breath for some time.
4. Place the right hand on the abdomen just above the navel and the left hand over the centre of the chest.
5. The right hand will move up with inhalation and down with exhalation.
6. The left hand should not move with the breath.
7. There should be no tension in the abdomen.
8. Do not try to force the movement in any way.
9. Try not to expand the chest or move the shoulders.
10. Feel the abdomen expanding and contracting.
11. Continue breathing slowly and deeply.



NADĪŚODHANA or ANULOMA VILOMA PRĀNĀYĀMA (Alternate Nostril Breathing)

The main characteristic feature of this prānāyāmais alternate breathing through the left and right nostrils without or with retention of breath (kumbhaka).

Sthiti: Any meditative posture.

Technique

1. Sit in any meditative posture.
2. Keep the spine and head straight with eyes closed.
3. Relax the body with few deep breaths.
4. Keep the left palm on the left knee in Jnāna mudra and the right hand should be in Nāsāgra mudra.
5. Place the ring and small fingers on the left nostril and fold the middle and index finger.
6. Place the right thumb on the right nostril.
7. Breathe in from the left nostril; close the left nostril with the small and ring fingers and release the thumb from the right nostril; exhale through the right nostril.
8. Next, inhale through the right nostril.
9. At the end of inhalation, close the right nostril, open the left nostril and exhale through it.
10. This complete process is one round of the Nādiśodhana or AnulomaVilomaPrānāyāma
11. Repeat 5 rounds.



Ratio and timing

1. For beginners, the duration of inhalation and exhalation should be equal.
2. Gradually make 1:2; inhalation: exhalation

Breathing

1. Breath should be slow, steady and controlled. It should not be forced or restricted in anyway.



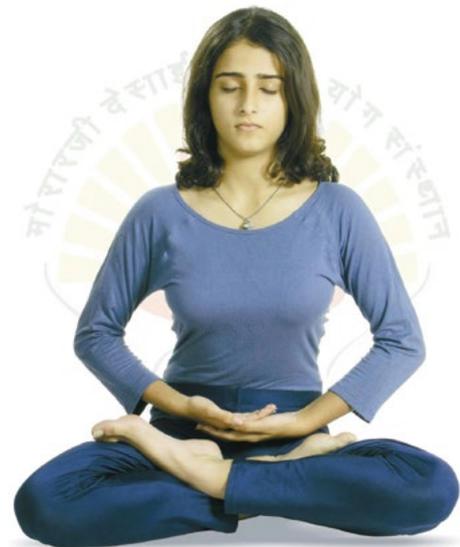
Benefits

1. The main purpose of this pranayama is to purify the principle channels of energy called nadis.
2. Induces tranquillity and helps to improve concentration.
3. Increases vitality and lowers the level of stress and anxiety.

UJJAYI PRANAYAMA

Technique

1. In this pranayama, inhalation (puraka) is done with both the nostrils; while for exhalation (rechaka) the left nostril is used. A mild sound is produced by a partial closure of the glottis during inhalation.
2. This pranayama may be practiced even while standing or walking without kumbhaka.



Benefits

1. Ujjayi Pranayama increases digestive fire.
2. It prevents Jalodara (dropsy of the belly).
3. Regular practice of this pranayama defends the practitioner from diseases of phlegm, degeneration, dyspepsia, dysentery, enlarged spleen, cough or fever.

Contraindications

1. Persons with low blood pressure should not practice this pranayama.
2. Persons suffering from hypertension and cardiac disorders should not apply kumbhaka; they should perform this without kumbhaka.

BHRĀMARĪ PRĀNĀYĀMA

Pavanameans wind and muktameans to release or to make free. As the name suggests, this asana is useful in removing wind or flatulence from the stomach and intestines.

Sthiti: Any meditative posture.

Techniques: Type- I

1. Sit in any meditative posture with eyes closed.
2. Inhale deeply through the nose.
3. Exhale slowly in a controlled manner while making a deep, steady humming sound such as that of a black bee. This is one round of Bhrāmarī.
4. Repeat 2 more rounds.



Type- II

1. Sit in any meditative posture with eyes closed.
2. Inhale deeply through the nose.
3. Close the eyes with index fingers, mouth with ring and small fingers and ears from respective thumbs as shown in the figure. This is also called ŚānmukhiMudrā.
4. Exhale slowly in a controlled manner while making a deep, steady humming sound such as that of a black bee. This is one round of Bhrāmarī.
5. Repeat 2 more rounds.



Benefits

1. The practice of Bhrāmarī relieves stress and helps in alleviating anxiety, anger and hyperactivity.
2. The resonance effect of humming sound creates a soothing effect on the mind and nervous system. It is a great tranquiliser found good in the management of stress related disorders.
3. It is a useful preparatory prānāyāma for concentration and meditation.



Note:

1. Please avoid this practice in case of nose and ear infections.

DHYĀNA

Dhyāna or meditation is an act of continuous contemplation.

Sthiti: Any meditative posture.

Techniques:

1. Sit in any meditative posture.
2. Keep your spine comfortably erect.
3. Hold Jnāna mudra as follows:
4. Touch the tip of the thumb to the tip of the index finger, forming a circle.
5. The other three fingers are straight and relaxed.
6. All three fingers are side-by-side and touching.
7. Keep your palms facing upwards upon the thighs.
8. Arms and shoulders should be loose and relaxed.
9. Close your eyes and sit with a slightly upturned face.
10. You need not concentrate. Just maintain a mild focus between the eyebrows and be conscious of your breath.
11. Dissolve your thoughts and attain single and pure thought.
12. Meditate



Benefits

1. It helps the practitioner to eliminate negative emotions like fear, anger, depression, anxiety and to develop positive emotions.
2. Keeps the mind calm and quiet.
3. Increases concentration, memory, clarity of thought and willpower.
4. Rejuvenates the whole body and mind giving them proper rest.



Note:

1. For beginners, soothing music may be played in the background during meditation.
2. Stay as long as you can.

ADDITIONAL PRACTICES

The following practices can also be done by the lactating woman progressively.

1. SHATKARMA

NETI (NASAL CLEANSING PROCESS)

This practice involves cleaning nasal passages.

Neti is a pre-requisite for cleaning up the respiratory passages for proper practice of Pranayama.

Techniques:

1. Sit in any meditative posture.
2. Keep your spine comfortably erect.
3. Hold Jnāna mudra as follows:
4. Touch the tip of the thumb to the tip of the index finger, forming a circle.
5. The other three fingers are straight and relaxed.
6. All three fingers are side-by-side and touching.
7. Keep your palms facing upwards upon the thighs.



Benefits

1. This exercise is excellent for cases chronic headache, insomnia and drowsiness.
2. The fall of hair or premature graying is arrested.

2. MULBANDHA

Mulabandha (Anal Lock/ Perineal Contraction)

Mulabandha is applied by contracting the external and internal anal sphincter muscles and is retained as long as one feels comfortable. This lock can be simultaneously applied with abdominal lock. In this bandha, the region between the anus and the genitals is to be contracted and raised up towards navel.

Technique 1

Stage 1`

1. Sit comfortably in Siddhasana, Padmasana or Sukhasana
2. Place both the hands (palms) on the knees firmly.
3. Close eyes and relax the whole body.
4. Keep spine erect.
5. Concentrate on perineal/vaginal muscles for a few minutes first.
6. Contract perineal/vaginal muscles for a few seconds and release gradually.
7. Keep the breath normal.
8. Contract and release up to 20 times.



Benefits

1. It stimulates pelvic nerves and tones the uro-genital and excretory systems.
2. It helps to relieve constipation and piles.
3. By this bandha, the nervous system, blood circulation and brain functions are greatly benefited.

Precautions

This practice should only be performed under experienced guidance. If wrongly practised, it may raise the energy very fast and precipitate symptoms of hyperactivity.

3. TRATAKA (PURIFICATION OF EYES/CONCENTRATED GAZING)

Mulabandha (Anal Lock/ Perineal Contraction)

The word Trataka originated from 'Tra' which literally means to release. This kriya is performed for cleansing and strengthening the eyes. In this kriya, eyes are usually focused on a selected object which can be the flame of a lamp or a burning candle. The gazing on the selected object is done without blinking till the eyes start watering.

Preparations

Place a burning candle or the lighted earthen lamp at eye level at a distance of 1.5 yards or 2.5 ft. from the eyes.

Techniques:

1. Sit in any meditative pose (Siddhasana or Padmasana) in a dark room with head, neck and back erect. Close the eyes.
2. Open the eyes and gaze at the flame (Jyoti) of a burning candle or a lighted earthen lamp with both eyes wide open till they get tired or tears come outside; now close the eyes and relax.
3. Repeat this exercise 3 to 4 times till one is able to fix the gaze for 10 or 15 minutes without blinking. If the object is found surrounded by many minor lights, the gaze must not be deflected from the central spot. The practice is considered successful when nothing except the light at which eyes are fixed is seen.
4. Close the eyes. Keep the closed eyes fixed at the image/impression of the flame in front of the eyes. Complete mastery will come only when it is felt that the glow of the light illuminates its own being.
5. The kriya should be practised under the guidance of a qualified Yoga teacher.
6. The practice of the Trataka technique results into Sambhavimudra.



Precautions

1. The place selected for this kriya should be a dark room, clam and quiet.
2. Persons having laucoma or chronic eye disorders should seek medical advice before practising it.
3. The flame should be still and should not flicker at all.



Benefits

1. It affects the Ajnacakra and begins to bring positive changes in the perception of all psychosomatic realms.
2. It improves memory and concentration.

YOGIC DIET:

Yoga has to be stretched beyond Asanas, Pranayamas and Meditation. The diet 'Ahara' part has to be executed along with the standard day to day practice. Consumption of refined food induces tamsikagunas and tamsik diseases. Hence 'Sattvikahara' which includes millets, other whole grains should be encouraged especially in women whose need for calcium, iron are more compared to the other individuals. Diet works to prevent illness, increase energy and improve overall health. It relies on food as close to its natural state as possible. This means eating foods that do not contain artificial

ingredients and are free of chemical preservatives and additives. The primary intake should ideally include organic whole foods that are as fresh as possible to ensure maximum nutritional value and life force. Diet rich in leafy vegetables, coconut milk, different millet varieties should be added to achieve optimum benefit.

Lactating mothers should take a balanced diet consisting of sprouts, brown rice (softly cooked) vegetable soups, porridge, multigrain, milk with honey, overnight soaked dry fruits. Take green leafy vegetables and seasonal fruits in moderate quantity. Excess nutrition will lead to too much weightgain leading to further complications.

Following are the food items prescribed for pregnant and lactating women:

1. Vegetables: All green leafy vegetables, Ash gourd, Ridge gourd, Apple gourd, Beet root, Turnip, Carrot, Cucumber, Spinach, Tomato etc.
2. Cereals: Unpolished rice, Whole wheat and multi-grain flour.
3. Sweet: Honey, Organic natural Jaggery.
4. Sprouts: Green gram, Bengal gram, Wheat, Alfalfa, Groundnut, Fenugreek.
5. Dry fruits: Dates, Figs, Dry grapes, Cashew, Almonds, Walnut, Dry grapes (soaked overnight).
6. Fresh fruits: Ripened, Seasonal and juicy fruits like Guava, Pear, Apple, Banana, Sapota, Orange, Sweet orange.
7. Fruit juice: Apple juice, Carrot juice and Orange juice.
8. Soups: Spinach, Carrot, Tomato, Beetroot and Coriander either all mixed or can be prepared separately.
9. Others: Lemon water, Butter milk, Tender coconut water etc. Avoid excess Tea, Coffee, Sugar/candy, refined white flour products, Garam masala, and deep fried and oily items.
 - Lactating mother should eat small portion of food at regular interval.
 - Avoid heavy, spicy food as they cause flatulence. Keep the salt intake low.
 - Consume more of fruits and vegetables daily.
 - Add honey to milk, limit intake of sugar.



Conclusion

Thus, Yoga practices play vital role in breast feeding mothers. It is health of mother which impacts the growth and development of a child in progressive stage. When mother is in peaceful condition, the baby goes quiet, in this way the baby could be breastfed comfortably and get enough milk from his/her mother. Mother feels better if she is relaxed, the condition goes back to the infant that will also feel good, and so on. If breast feeding mothers do Yoga, there will be an increase in breast milk production and at the same this helps mothers to breastfeed successfully and increases the chance for exclusive breast feeding for babies. From the description above, it is shown that Yoga can give peace of mind that is needed by breast feeding mother, so it increases mother's confidence and makes her feel much more relaxed for nursing and caring the baby for successful lactation.

SHANTI PATHA

*omsarvebhavantusukhinaù sarvesantunirāmayäù |
sarvebhadräëipaçyantumākāçcitduùkhabhāgbhavet ||
omçāntiù çāntiù çāntiù ||*

May all be happy.

May all be free from disease.

May all see only things auspicious.

May none suffer from misery.

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