

# Importance Of Yoga and Meditation Practices in During Pandemic

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## Abstract

Yoga and meditation are two forms of physical and mental exercises which have stood the test of time. Dating back thousands of years, these practices remain popular today and are, in many ways, more relevant in modern times. The ability to switch off and clear your mind is invaluable, and this can be achieved in both practices. Yoga and meditation when practiced together reinforce the connection between mind and body, improving mainly health and well-being. There are several styles of yoga that merge meditation with the physical routines, which use controlled breathing throughout the poses of yoga. By simply unwinding, clearing the mind and concentrating on controlled breathing, one can meditate without practicing yoga as well. Both yoga and meditation have proven health benefits when practiced regularly.

**Keyword:** Yoga, Meditation, Practices, Pandemic etc.

## Introduction

Yoga is a word that became popular across the world in the last few years. Yoga is not only beneficial for the body but also for the mind. It helps to improve blood flow and helps in building mind clarity. For ages, yoga was known to be beneficial for our physical & mental health.

Meditation is often defined as thinking continuously about one object of thought. Meditation must reveal the true nature of that object upon which we are meditating. Such revelation comes not as a thought, but as a feeling. Therefore, meditation is a process in which we shift from thinking to feeling. It is a journey from the complexity of mind to the simplicity of heart. It is for this reason that most methods of meditation involve the heart.

WHO declared Corona virus disease 2019 (COVID-19), originating from Wuhan, China, caused by Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus-2 (SARS CoV-2), as a pandemic on March 11, 2020. To prevent spread and provide sufficient time for hospitals' readiness, the Governments worldwide had to impose "Lockdown" in their respective countries. Under lockdown, people were restricted from remaining outdoors with certain exceptions resulting from emergencies.

During this ongoing corona virus pandemic, when we are all bound to live a restricted life under the constant fear of infection risks, it is natural for anyone to develop anxiety. The continuous flow of negative news, the inadequacy of daily resources, everything is adding to this growing anxiety and depression. Being confined at home for such long periods of time, can be mentally challenging for us. When our mind is flooded with the uncertainty of the future, we often experience sleepless nights causing fatigue. Many of us are unable to relax our mind during this time thereby increasing the stress on our minds.

During this time, it is important to understand that mental health is very important for survival. To help with this growing level of anxiety and depression, we must lead a healthy lifestyle, stay connected to our loved ones, and practice yoga at home.

**Immunity boosting yoga and meditation:**

## Yoga

Good Health is the right of every human being. But this right depends on individual, social and environmental factors. Along with social or environmental factors to a large extent, we can develop a better immune system and a better perception of oneself so that other conditions do not affect us adversely and we can achieve good health. Health is a positive concept. Positive health does not mean merely freedom from disease, but, it also include a jubilant and energetic feeling of well-being with an amount of general resistance and capacity to easily cultivate immunity against specific offending agents. There are many modern and indigenous methods and disciplines that can help us to successfully fight with diseases.

### General Guidelines for Yogic Practices

- The yogic practices should start with a quiet mood which could be attained by reciting a short prayer.
- It is essential that body should be prepared by activities such as ankle bending, knee bending, finger movements, hand clenching, wrist bending, wrist rotation, elbow bending, shoulder rotation and eye movement. After this, Surya Namaskara can be practised.
- Regularity of practice is essential both in the physical and mental aspects of yoga.
- Patience is an important requirement for yoga. Do not despair if you do not succeed today in doing a certain asana or in following a right principle of conduct. Perseverance in your efforts is needed. Success will come with time.
- Do not compete but cooperate. A spirit of competition is a definite hindrance on the path of yoga. Competitions feed our ego while yoga helps us to rise above our ego.
- Yogic practices should be learnt under the guidance of experienced teacher. 4 Yoga : A Healthy Way of Living
- Some yogic practices should be practiced on an empty or on a very light stomach.
- Early morning is the ideal time for yoga practice but it can also be practiced in the evening.
- Yoga should not be practiced in hurry or when you are exhausted.
- Select a well-ventilated, clean and non-disturbing place for your practice.
- Yogic practices should not be performed on hard surface. A mat or a blanket can be used for this purpose.
- Bathing before the practice is good. Use cold or warm water as per the requirement of the individual and season.
- Clothes should be loose and comfortable while performing the yogic practices.
- Breathing should be as normal/natural as possible. It is not to be manipulated unless instructed specifically to do so.
- There are limitations of yogic practices. If you are suffering from any problem or chronic disease, inform your teacher before starting yogic practices.
- Yogic practices should be adopted on the basis of the principle of progress. At initial stage, easy practices should be adopted. Later on more difficult ones can be practiced. Therefore, start with simple yogic practices and gradually proceed to do advance practices.
- Yogic practices should not be combined with other physical activities in same session. These are two different types of activities and could be separately practiced.
- Yogic practices can be carried on at home once they are properly learnt in the school.
- Yoga has a broader meaning. Therefore, apart from asana and pranayama, one should practice moral and ethical values in life

## Meditation

Meditation is a practice which helps in concentration of the body and mind. In meditation, concentration is focused for a long time on a single object like tip of the nose, space between eyebrows, etc. It develops a sense of well-being and improves memory and decision making power in the person.

### Guidelines for the Practice of Meditation:

- Practice of asana and *pranayama* if performed before meditation will help in developing ability to sit in one position for a considerable period of time in meditation.
- Select a peaceful calm and quiet place for the practice of Meditation.
- Allow your eyes to get closed gently to enter into an inner awareness.
- A meditative practice invites many thoughts, memories and emotions may surface on mind. Remain non-reactive to them.
- As you continue with this process for some time, you may feel an abstract and a non-specific awareness of the whole body. Now continue with the whole body awareness. In case of any difficulty go back to the breathing awareness.
- In the beginning it is, generally difficult to observe the breath. If mind wanders, do not feel guilty. Slowly but firmly bring your attention to your breath.

### Why Yoga and Meditation during Pandemic?

Studies suggest that yoga contributes to improving the immune system since it is a combination of physical exercise, controlled breathing and mental concentration- all of which are known to have health benefits. Among the many yoga *asanas*, *shavasana* and *sasakasana* reduce stress which, many practitioners believe, increases the efficiency of the immune system. Breathing techniques like *pranayam* improve the functioning of the respiratory system. *Trikonasana* improves blood circulation which benefits all our organs.

Nearly 10 percent of people diagnosed with Covid-19 experience prolonged symptoms, including trouble breathing, blood cloths, headaches, nausea, muscle pain, and fatigue that lasts for weeks, months, and possibly years after testing positive, “ says Dr. Seema Jaiswal, general physician and yoga expert, adding, “Yoga is helping these long – haul patients in easing stress and pain, maintaining mobility, and breathing easier. Even the WHO has urged people to take up yoga during the pandemic.

### Daily Mindfulness Meditation and Yoga:

One study found that 6 weeks of 20 minutes of daily mindfulness meditation resulted in a significant down regulation of a pro-inflammatory gene and a significant reduction of pro-inflammatory activity. Furthermore, effects on the innate immune system have been found in complementary practices. This was demonstrated in a study showing that 90 minutes of yogic asana stretching is able to increase expression of the two important antimicrobial peptides– core protein molecules in the innate immune system– which are of importance to COVID-19 as they are highly expressed in respiratory cells.

Yoga therapy has also been shown to down regulate the cytokine receptors and mantra-based meditation and yoga asana practices were found to have positive effects. They regulate levels of the pro-inflammatory cytokine and metabolism of the Alzheimer’s disease-associated myeloid-b protein. Meditation practice also is reported to reduce expression of pro-inflammatory genes.

Studies have shown that meditation, as well as yoga is capable of increasing vagal tone. In addition to targeting the central vagal tone response, circulating levels of pro-inflammatory cytokines are influenced by different types of complementary practice. Some of the cytokine- related effects of seated meditation,

breathing practices, and yoga asana practices are related to a reduction in sympathetic nervous system activation.

### Conclusion:

Over all Yoga and Meditation are beneficial for in the pandemic situation. It helps in keeping our mental and physical health intact. It helps us to connect to nature. Furthermore, your body becomes more flexible after consistent yoga practice and you also develop a great sense of self-discipline and self-awareness. In short, it improves our well-being and gives us better mental clarity.

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