

Yoga – A lifestyle to protect from viral infections.



It is proven in ample medical research reports and many yoga practitioners/yogis can attest as well, yoga helps to lower stress hormones, strengthening our body functions and systems, precisely the lungs and the respiratory system. The lung and the respiratory system benefit greatly from yoga.

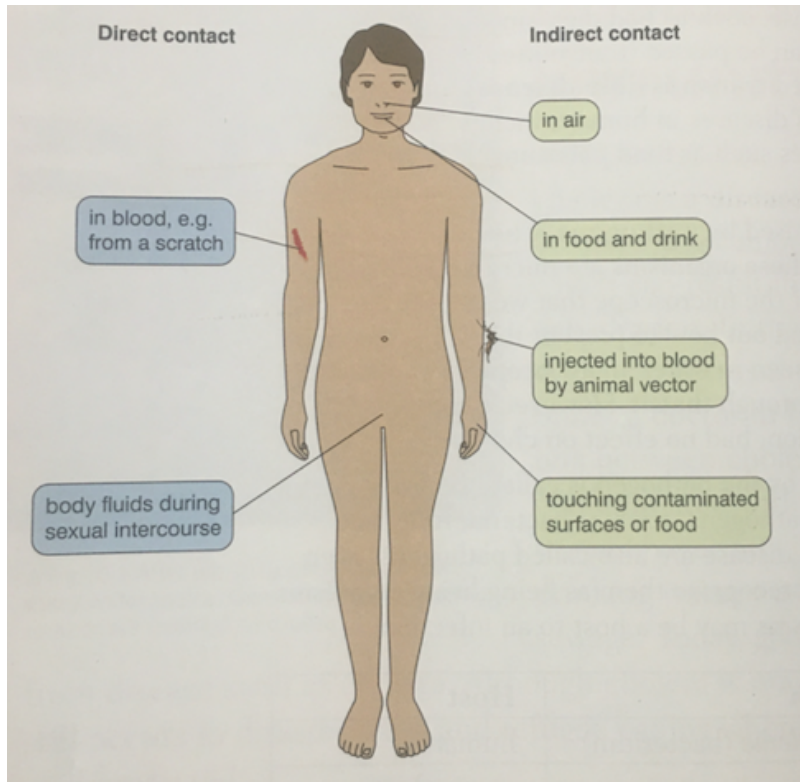
Stress and anxiety weaken our immune system, leaving us more vulnerable to viral infections and frequent illnesses. Stress is today's number one root cause for most illnesses. With a weakened immune system we are prone to catch a cold, running nose, coughs, stomach aches and many other illnesses and a virus can enter our body easily and at any time.

Our modern world becomes a global village, but our cultures and traditions are still different due to geographical and climatic reason. Habits or traditions of one culture/society can be unhealthy for another culture or society. If there are any disturbances in one society then it spreads quickly to another society. The current situation of Coronavirus outbreak throughout the world is one of the examples of wrong food habit culture. It spreads from animal to human being and become an epidemic.

What is a virus and how do they spread?

Viruses are small infectious microscopic organisms (pathogens) that exist almost everywhere on earth. It can infect plants, animals, humans and all other living cells.

There are many different ways that viruses can be transmitted:



Direct contact methods are those where the pathogen (a disease-causing organism) is transmitted by the transfer of **body fluids**, from a host (an organism that is attacked by a pathogen) to an uninfected person. These fluids include:

- blood
- semen
- saliva and other fluids made in the body.

Indirect contact methods of transmission are where the pathogen leaves the host and is carried in some way to an uninfected individual. Transmission happens through:

- water droplets in the air, for example, colds and flu, when the host coughs and sneezes
- infected drinking water, for example, cholera
- touching contaminated surfaces, for example food and faeces or foot fungus
- insect bites

Some common viral diseases are:

- Smallpox, common cold and different types of flu
- Measles, mumps, rubella, chicken pox and shingles
- Polio and rabies
- Ebola and Dengue fever
- HIV, Syphilis, Herpes and Hepatitis



Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) by World Health Organization

Coronaviruses (CoV) are a large family of viruses that cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS - CoV) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS - CoV). Several known coronaviruses are circulating in animals that have not yet infected humans. Common signs of infection include the following symptoms may appear **2 - 14 days after exposure**.

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath and breathing difficulties

In the current situation one should not panic and just be aware and alert about any of these symptoms. **To check it by yourself, you can take a breath in and hold for few seconds, if you feel pain or uncomfortable then you might have an infection.** If one of these symptoms occur, act responsible, take precautions and inform medical facilities for proper care. It is certainly curable.

Standard recommendations to prevent infection spread include:

- Avoid big gatherings and public places.
- Keep 3 feet distance from others.
- Wash your hands frequently (normal soap is efficient enough).
- Refrain from touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Avoid cold surroundings.
- Drink often lukewarm water and use ginger and turmeric once a day.
- Stay hydrated drink more warm water, coconut water and eat water-rich fruits and vegetables like tomatoes, cucumbers, pomelos and oranges.
- Avoid eating outside, eat home-cooked food.
- Reduce or avoid non-vegetarian food.

Yogic Management:

Medications can help the body recover from diseases, but they don't help improve the body's immunity. Yoga is one of the most effective and natural immunity booster that you can adopt for a healthier life. It is an ancient art that strengthens the body and relaxes the mind.

Yoga is not an alternative to medicines but rather a precautionary measure to keep diseases away. Don't wait for the flu or disease to come but rather beat it naturally and with simple steps.

The approach of yoga is totally different from medicine. Yoga is not for instant effects or benefits. Yoga helps us to create a healthy and happy lifestyle to express ourselves with



excellence. Living yoga means living mindful and with discipline. Living with awareness of body, mind and emotions to create inner and outer peace and live in harmony with nature and all living creatures.

How can yoga help?

Prevention is the best cure and yoga is one of the most holistic ways to prevent and reduce the risk of any infection. According to Sage Patanjali's **Eight limbs of Yoga**, yoga starts with *yama*, *niyama*, *asana*, *pranayama* and then *pratyahara*, *dharna*, *dhyana*, *samadhi*. By following the first four steps one can certainly get a healthy and content life.

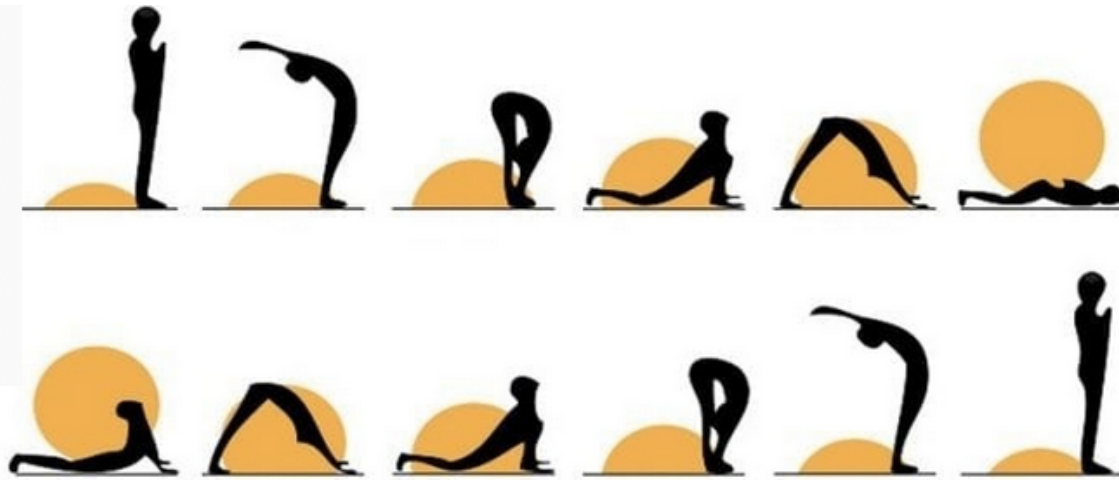
1. Non-Violence (1 of the *Yama* out of 5) – By practising non-violence in eating habits, one can avoid the risk of infection or other physical illnesses.
2. Cleanliness (1 of the *Niyama* out of 5) – Cleaning of limbs, face or whole body from inside and outside, keeps us germs free and reduces the chance of any other infections.
3. *Asanas* – *Asanas* (physical movements/postures) prepares the ground for a healthy and strong body. A combination of stretching, bending, twisting, inversion, Sun Salutation promotes metabolism, blood and *prana* flow to the cells and boosts the immune system.
4. *Pranayama* – Pranayama is the most important part of yoga, to keep ourselves free from physical, mental and emotional health issues. Through breathing techniques, one can improve the quality of the respiratory and digestive system. It protects the lungs and other internal organs from any infection. Pranayama works as a detox to purify internal systems naturally.

Above mentioned four steps of yoga create a healthy lifestyle and if one can move ahead and continue with other steps like *Pratyahara* (gives deep relaxation of body and mind to boost the healing process), *Dharana* (reduces anxiety, worries and restless mind), and *Dhyana* (for a more mindful living), then certainly one can live a natural and healthy life and can protect or reduce the risk of any infection.

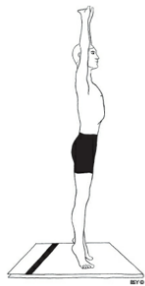
Yoga practices to boost your immune system:

Asanas

Sun Salutation – Is a complete practice to boost our immune system and promotes the metabolism, increases strength, stamina, flexibility and balances the endocrine gland's secretion. There are different versions of Sun Salutation taught. The sequence below is the most effective and traditional one. If you can do three to six rounds every day in the morning, then it is the best.



If you are not familiar with the Sun Salutation practice then you can start with some simple postures like stretching, forward bending, backward bending, twisting and basic inverted pose such as:



upward stretching
bending



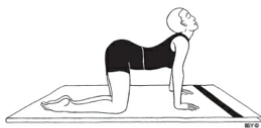
lateral stretching



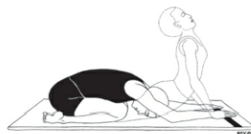
side twist



forward



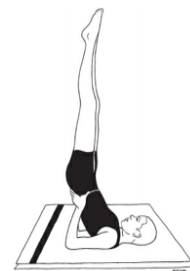
cat and cow pose



child and cobra pose



forward bending

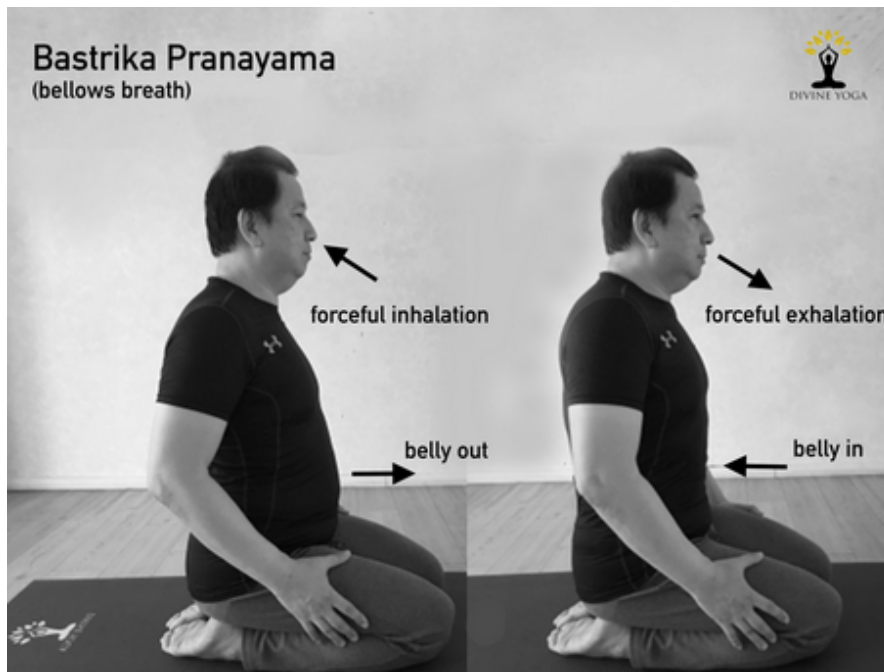


basic shoulder stand

Pranayamas

Pranayama is an amazing technique to purify your respiratory system. When you learn to breathe correctly, you get a rich supply of oxygen to your body and at the same time you clean your lungs and make the cells healthy again. When we exercise and inhale infected air, we cannot remove all infected air from our lungs through normal (unconscious) breathing. Pranayama, (conscious) breathing is the most powerful, natural and an effective method to throw out inner toxins from our respiratory system. Pranayama saves lungs from cough and cold, sneezing and other symptoms related to lungs.

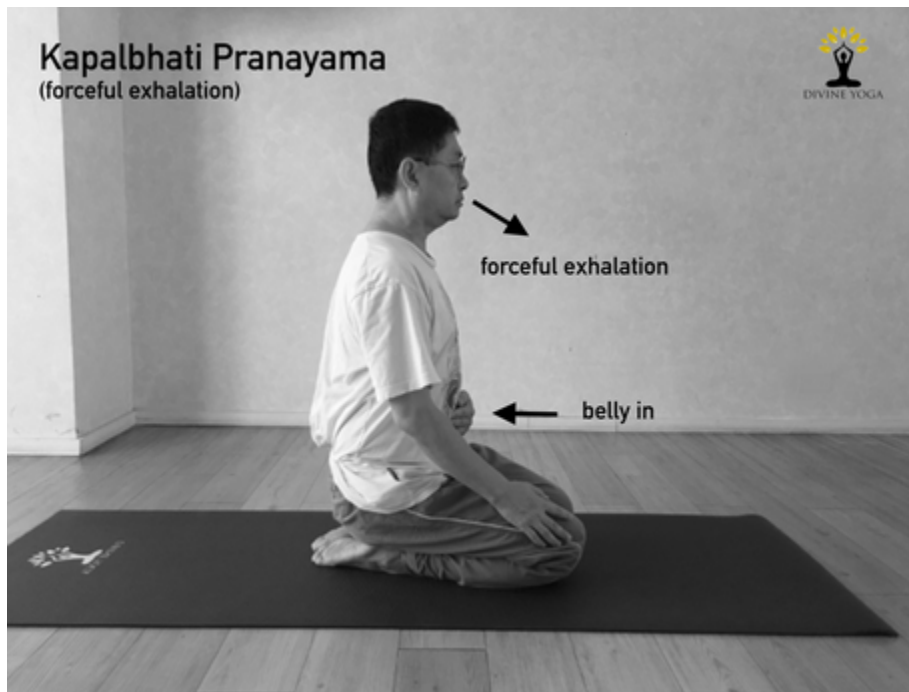
1. Bhastrika, forceful breathing (bellows breath)



The Sanskrit word “bhastrika” means “bellows” mostly used by blacksmiths to melt metal. This rapid breathing is also same to activate fire element and promote ventilation in lungs helps protect any infection. In this breathing, you have to use abdominal muscles forcefully during inhalation and exhalation. One can do 3 – 5 rounds having 50 – 200 breaths in a round. It keeps body warm and energetic due to proper gas exchange and improve the immune system, too.

Precaution: People suffering from High blood pressure, hyper thyroid, acidity, severe heart ailments should not do this.

2. Kapalabhati (forceful exhalation)



A breathing technique that cleanses and detoxifies lungs and forehead (sinuses). Increases vital energy to help fight against any infection. To make it more effective, use the abdominal muscles. With inhalation, the belly goes out, with exhalation the belly goes in. Practice by sitting upright, inhale normally and exhale forcefully. Inhalation and exhalation are one breath. Beginners can do one by one breathing with slow speed; regular practitioners can do it with medium speed. Morning time is always the best for Kapalabhati. This practice has instant benefits. Recommended amount: 50–100 breaths in one round, do 3-5 rounds. If you spend a lot of time outdoors, you can do 10–20 breaths every hour.

Precaution: People with high blood pressure, reactive quick temper, heart problems, acidity, ulcer, hyperthyroid and post-surgery patients must refrain from this practice.

3. Nadi Shodana (alternate nostril breathing)



This is the most effective and important yoga practice among all. The whole purpose of yoga is to perfect this practice. To perfect means to make our breathing slow, smooth, rhythmic and long. This practice also recharges each and every cell including the brain cells. It cleans our nerve passages as well. '*Nadi*' means nerves through which prana and the blood flow and '*Shodhana*' means cleaning. It works like a vacuum cleaner, cleans our nerve passages and removes blockages from our bloodstream and heart. This practice is not only instant but also has long-term effects to improve the quality of respiratory organs and prevent it from any infections.

Sit upright and close your eyes. Place your right index and middle fingers at your eyebrow centre and cover your right nostril with your right thumb. Inhale slowly and deeply without force only through the left nostril. Cover the left nostril with your ring finger and pause for a second. Release the right nostril and exhale slowly and completely through the right nostril. Inhale through the right nostril, cover the right nostril, pause for a second, then release the left nostril and exhale slowly and completely. This constitutes one complete breath. Practice for 5 to 10 minutes in the morning prior to breakfast or before going to bed but not right after meals.

Precaution: There is no precaution. Everyone can do this practice even if you have some other health issues.

Bhastrika and *kapalabhati* breathing increases the body temperature instantly, which helps to reduce the risk of viral infections. Also, pranayama controls different symptoms like sneezing and coughing, which helps to reduce the chance of spreading infections from one person to another.

4) Neti (Nasal cleansing)



Neti is one of the six Hatha yoga purification techniques, which are essential in maintaining a healthy body and mind. For *Neti* you need a special neti pot. Use lukewarm saline water to clean the nasal passage and the sinus cavity to prevent viral infections and to help cure chronic sinus problems. This practice has instant benefits. It is very effective for people who suffer from allergies, stuffy nose, sinusitis, and asthma. *Neti* not only cleans our facial muscles and gives our face a glowing and radiant skin, but it also clears our mind and throws away mental stress. It can be done, in the morning or evening according to our need. *Neti* is a safe and simple practice and extremely beneficial for our overall health and has no side effects.

There are other natural detox practices like *kunjla* (respiratory tract cleansing) and *laghoo sankhaprakshalana* (digestive tract cleansing) to remove toxic particles from the body. These practices can be done weekly or monthly according to your need. For the first time, it is recommended to do it under the guidance of an experienced yoga teacher.



Yoga is a self dependent system of healing. It gives health in our own hand.

Yoga *Sutra*, chapter2, sloka16 says:

**हेयम दुखम अनागतं
(Heyam Dukham Anagatam)
“The pain that is yet to come can be avoided.”**

Therefore adopt yoga as a lifestyle. Use it as a precautionary method to maintain your health. Don't wait for the disease to come. Start and live a yogic life today, to be healthy and happy in future.

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