

Yoga as an Immunity Booster

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Abstract

Yoga is a holistic practice that strengthens our physical body, as well as the microscopic systems that are not visible to the eye. As a result, the body's natural defence mechanisms also improve. A healthy, disease-free body can be easily achieved by adopting a healthy lifestyle, including eating unprocessed, whole foods, maintaining a regular yoga and meditation practice, getting plenty of sleep, and minimizing stressors. Yoga, and meditation are the keys to achieving our full potential. Regular practice of yoga has shown effective results. Different asanas boost immunity, build the body's strength, increase energy levels, bring down anxiety and stress, infuses positivity and freshness in the mind.

Keywords: COVID-19, Immunity, Trikonasana, Uttanasana, Bhujangasana, Balasana, Matsyasana, Viparitkarani.

Introduction:

Yoga has proven time and time again that it can help reduce our stress levels and calm us down. Stress, on the other hand, is known to negatively impact our immune system due to the chronic inflammation it triggers. So, when yoga has an anti-inflammatory effect on our body, it ends up keeping our immune system intact. As a result, we are in a better position to defend our health against infection or the flu.

As life returns to the new normal after the lockdown is lifted, we face new challenges. The most important thing is to get out of our house to resume our professional life at a time when cases of COVID-19 is still in India. So, what can protect us from the COVID-19 pandemic other than wearing a mask, using hand sanitizer, maintaining social distancing and getting comprehensive health insurance? It's our own immune system! This is a prerequisite for keeping it strong and what might be a better way to do it naturally than through easy yoga poses.

In order for yoga to work for you, you need to keep practicing it consistently. Don't be turned off thinking that you don't have some fancy mats, sportswear, belts, or bricks to get you started in yoga. Yoga, in its purest form as practiced in ancient India, is still proving to be fruitful for health.

We have put together a yoga sequence that will help you reduce stress and boost your immune system without you having to rely on any additional equipment.

Start by doing a gentle warm-up for 5 to 10 minutes:

- Rotate your head clockwise and counter clockwise.
- Rotate your arms in circles.
- Do some jumps.
- Turn your waist, stretch to the left side and then to the right.
- Move your ankles in circles.

Once you feel your heart rate gradually increasing, it is time to start the yoga asanas. These following six Yoga asanas may help to increase your immune system.

Trikonasana



Trikonasana is a Sanskrit word. Which means tri = three (3), Kona = Angle, asana = pose. In **Trikonasana**, the hands, feet and spine combine to form a triangle shape. That is why it is called **Triangle Pose** in English.

Steps:

- To do this asana, first of all you should stand upright.

- Then you keep the feet in a mutually comfortable distance and stand.
- Now raise your hands up. And make sure that it is at the same level as your shoulders. These hands should not be up or down.
- Keeping the paws of your left foot straight, rotate the paws of your right foot 90 degrees.
- Now take long and deep breaths and while exhaling slowly tilt your body from waist to right.
- Try to touch your right heel with the right hand and raise your left hand towards the sky.
- Stay in this position for a while and breathe normally and release
- Breathe in slowly and rise up.
- Now you straighten the right leg and rotate the paws of your left foot 90 degrees. Repeat this asana again.

For Beginners:

- If you are doing this posture for the first time then you will not be able to touch your heel. So, do as much as you can.
- When you bend from your waist, bend as much as you can. Do not try forcefully.
- Instead of doing this pose quickly, do it slowly.

Precautions:

- People who have a neck injury should not do this pose.
- Even those who have back injuries should not do this asana.
- They should not do this asana if they are suffering like slip disk or sciatica.
- Makes the thighs, spine, chest, shoulders strong and flexible.

Benefits:

- Helps reduce mental stress.
- Performing this asana provides relief in back pain.
- Those who want to increase the height should do this asana.
- By doing this asana, the problem related to digestion ends
- Stretches hips, gorge, shoulders, chest.
- Strengthens your waist muscles.

1. Uttanasana (Forward Bending)



Most commonly known as Standing Forward Bend, Uttanasana falls into the category of inverted yoga postures. The blood circulation in the upper body is increased during the practice. The brain benefits the most due to that. For that reason, Uttanasana can effectively fight depression and anxiety. The Sanskrit name Uttanasana is derived from 3 words meaning Ut = Intense or deep; Tan = To stretch or extend; Asana = Posture.

Steps:

- You can start it from [Tadasana](#) position. Keep your arms straight beside your thighs.
- Now exhale and then bend forward but not using your waist, but by using your hip joints.
- Your chest and stomach should be in front of your thighs.
- Beginners tend to bend their knees to attain Uttanasana.
- It might be easier for flexible people to bend down without bending their knees.
- Now try to bring you head to your knees. Then try to grip the back of your ankles.
- Hold this position for 20-30 seconds and keep breathing normally.
- Now slowly come back to the starting position by putting your hands on your hips, while inhaling.
- Relax yourself and exhale.

For Beginners:

Uttanasana is not so easy to perform at home. If you are a beginner, then just follow these simple steps to do Uttanasana easily.

- Stand straight, Inhale and move your hands backward as much you can comfortably.
- Exhale and bend your body downwards as much you can easily.
- move up by Inhaling and bent down by exhaling, follow this till your hand reaches the floor.
- After this try to touch your head with knees and hold your legs with hands.

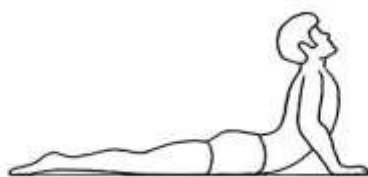
Precautions:

- Don't have any meal before practicing Uttanasana. There should be gap of at least 4-6 hours.
- Don't practice, if you are suffering from Glaucoma or Sciatica.
- Pregnant women should not practice Uttanasana.
- Avoid this, if you have a lower back injury or injury in your Ankle joint or Knee joint.

Benefits:

- Relieve stomach pain and aids digestion.
- Increase the strength and flexibility of the spine.
- Stimulates the functioning of kidney, liver and spleen.
- Reduces menstrual cramps during menstruation.
- Tones and revitalize spinal nerves.
- Effectively removes depression, stress and anxiety.
- Calms the brain and soothes brain cells.
- Enhance blood circulation in the body, especially in the brain.
- Stretches the hips, muscles of legs and hamstrings.
- Prevents or cures infertility, osteoporosis and sinusitis.

2. Bhujangasana (Cobra Pose)



Steps:

- Lie on your stomach with your toes flat on the floor and forehead resting on the ground.
- Keep your legs close together, with your feet and heels lightly touching each other.
- Place your hands (palms downwards) under your shoulders, keeping your elbows parallel and close to your torso.
- Taking a deep breath in, slowly lift your head, chest and abdomen while keeping your navel on the floor.

- Pull your torso back and off the floor with the support of your hands. **Checkpoint:** Are you putting equal pressure on both the palms?
- Keep breathing with awareness, as you curve your spine vertebra by vertebra. If possible, straighten your arms by arching your back as much as possible; tilt your head back and look up. **Checkpoint:** Are your shoulders away from your ears? Keep your shoulders relaxed, even if it means bending your elbows. With regular practice, you will be able to deepen the stretch by straightening the elbows.
- Ensure that your feet are still close together. Keep smiling and breathing. Smiling Cobras! Don't overdo the stretch or overstrain yourself.
- Breathing out, gently bring your abdomen, chest and head back to the floor.

Precautions:

- People who suffer from acute neck disease like spondylitis
- Cobra posture should not be done if you have a severe spinal operation or injury
- Do not do Bhujangasana if you are pregnant
- Do not try this if you have recently had stomach surgery
- The person who has carpal tunnel syndrome or any other wrist problem should avoid it completely
- If you have a severe headache problem, consult a doctor before performing any asana such as migraine

Benefits:

- Opens up the shoulders and neck.
- Tones the abdomen.
- Strengthens the entire back and shoulders.
- Improves flexibility of the upper and middle back.
- Expands the chest.
- Improves blood circulation.
- Reduces fatigue and stress.
- Useful for people with respiratory disorders such as asthma.

3. Balasana (Child Pose)



In Sanskrit ‘Bala’, means ‘child’. Balasana or Child’s Pose, is generally practiced at the end of an intense yoga sequence wherein the connection of the breath and the movement of the body would have been lost. With the practice of Balasana concluding such a sequence, it allows one to come to peace with the body with the connection of the breath.

Steps:

- Kneel down on the floor and touch your big toes to each other as you sit on your heels. Once you are comfortable, spread your knees hip-width apart. Inhale.
- Bend forward, and lay your torso between your thighs as you exhale.
- Now, broaden the sacrum all across the back of the pelvis, and narrow the points of your hip such that they point towards the navel. Settle down on the inner thighs.
- Stretch the tailbone away from the back of the pelvis as you lift the base of your head slightly away from the back of the neck.
- Stretch your arms forward and place them in front of you, such that they are in line with your knees. Release the fronts of your shoulder to the floor. You must feel the weight of the front shoulders pulling the blades widely across your back.
- Since this asana is a resting pose, you can stay in the pose from anywhere between 30 seconds to a few minutes.
- To release the asana, first stretch the front torso. Then, breathe in and lift from the tailbone while it pushes down into the pelvis.

For Beginners:

- It is not a common practice to breathe fully and consciously upto the back of our torso. Practicing the Balasana the right way will help you do that.
- As you begin the practice of yoga, you can practice this asana to get you ready for a deep forward bend.

Precautions:

- If you find it difficult or uncomfortable to place your head on the floor, you can use a pillow for comfort.
- It is best to avoid doing this asana if you are [suffering from diarrhea](#) or knee injuries.
- Patients with high blood pressure must avoid practicing this asana.

Benefits:

- It helps release tension in the chest, back, and shoulders.
- This asana is highly recommended, especially if you have a bout of dizziness or fatigue during the day or during your workout.
- This asana helps to reduce stress and anxiety.
- It helps to massage and flex the internal organs in the body, keeping them active and supple.
- This asana helps to stretch and lengthen the spine.
- If this asana is done with support on the head and the torso, it relieves pain in the lower back and neck.
- It helps to stretch the ankles, hips, and thighs.
- It promotes blood circulation all throughout the body.
- The tendons, muscles, and ligaments in the knee area are thoroughly stretched.
- It encourages the right way of breathing and calms both the body and the mind.

4. Matsyasana (Fish Pose)



Matsyasana is comprised of two Sanskrit words ‘Matsya’ means fish and ‘Asana’ means yoga pose. While performing, the yoga posture looks like a fish in the final stage, hence, the name is fish pose or matsyasana.

Steps:

- Sit in Padmasana.
- Slowly bend backward and lie on your back completely.

- Lift the upper back with the support of elbows and palms and place the crown of your head on the ground.
- Hold the left foot with the right hand and subsequently the right foot with the left hand, resting the elbows on the floor.
- The knees must touch the ground and the back should be arched to the extent that the body is supported on the head and the knees. Maintain the final posture.
- While returning, release the toes, place palms on the ground, straighten the head with the help of hands and come up slowly.
- Relax in Savasana.

Precautions:

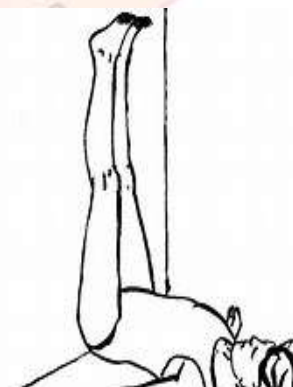
- Abnormal Blood Pressure: Individuals suffering from high or low blood pressure should avoid this posture.
- Neck Injury: Neck injuries or any part of the lower back or middle back can make it difficult to practice this Fish Pose and hence should be avoided.
- Migraine: Migraine patients may find this pose challenging but, if practiced, should be done slowly with the guidance of a yoga teacher.
- Spondylitis: Care should be taken if practiced by someone who is suffering from spondylitis. Preferably should be avoided if it is severe. But if spondylitis is in initial stages then with proper guidance of a yoga teacher Fish Pose (Matsyasana) can be practiced.
- Pregnant: Women who are pregnant should not attempt this yoga pose.
- Tightness in Neck or Back: If at the time of practice of Matsyasana, if one feels any kind of tightness around the lower neck and upper back, one should immediately stop doing the yoga pose and relax in Corpse Pose (Savasana).
- General Heart Ailments: Since breathing in this yoga pose is deep, it may not be comfortable for someone suffering from heart ailments.

Benefits:

- Cures constipation: Matsyasana gives an excellent massage to the abdominal

organs thereby helping to alleviate various types of digestive disorders including constipation.

- Throat diseases: The regular practice of the yoga pose helps in the prevention and management of many throat diseases.
- Lungs disorders: It helps to expand the chest and beneficial in lungs and respiratory disorders.
- Asthma prevention: The rib cage and lungs are given an accentuated stretch which helps to improve the breathing process by allowing the chest to expand to full capacity during respiration. It is therefore a good asana for those people who suffer from asthma, bronchitis, or any other lung ailments.
- Sperm formation: It has been practically observed that those who perform the fish pose on regular basis, have no issue in the formation of sperms and ova. It is useful for ladies in preventing and curing various forms of reproductive problems.
- Spine flexibility: It relaxes the muscles of the upper back and makes the spine resilient.
- Back pain: The practice of the pose under the guidance of a yoga teacher will ensure to cure back pain.
- Pelvic health: It's a good yoga practice for the health of the pelvic region.
- Healthy uterus: The practice of fish pose helps to strengthen the uterus thus beneficial for overcoming uterus problems.

5. Viparitkarani

Viparita Karani is a Sanskrit language word consisting of two words, in which the first word is "Viparita" which means "inverted" and the second word is "Karani" which means "Doing". In some Hindu scriptures it has been said that the Viparita

Karani reduces wrinkles. This is one of the most beneficial Restorative poses.

Steps:

- At first, lie down on the floor and let the body relax
- Gently lift both the legs
- When the legs come to 45 ° angle, support the waist with your palms and lift the hips too
- Now lift the legs upwards until they are straight upwards
- Keep in mind that the elbows should remain on the ground and your palms should give support to the waist
- The back should be approximately 45 ° angle from the ground
- Breathe for 30-60 seconds in this yoga pose
- To get out of the asana, do all the steps in reverse order

Precautions:

- A person with a hip or knee injury should avoid this posture.
- If you have serious problems like cataracts, avoid this posture.
- Patients with glaucoma, hypertension or hernia should not do this posture.
- Do not do this posture during women's menstruation.
- If you have back pain problems, then put a folded blanket under your waist and make this asana
- Pregnant women should avoid doing this posture.

Benefits:

- Removes pain and exhaustion in the legs
- The legs, the torso, and the neck, sitting bones relax by bringing a slight pull.
- Relieves light-back pain
- The mind relaxes thus you can get relieve from anxiety
- Arthritis
- Digestive problems
- Insomnia
- Headache
- High and low blood pressure
- Mild depression
- Migraine
- Respiratory disorder

- nervous system
- Menstrual cramps
- Varicose veins
- Urinary disorders get healed with regular practice of this asana

Conclusion:

When sick, antibiotics and other medications can help the body recover from the disease. However, what medicine fails to do is improve the body's immune system. This is where yoga comes to the rescue! Yoga is one of the most effective and proven natural immunity boosters that can lead to a healthy, disease-free body. Yoga lowers stress hormones and strengthens the nervous system while stimulating the lymphatic system, which removes toxins from the body. Yoga calms the mind and can contribute to deeper, more regulated sleep, which is crucial for well-being; sleep is one of the most important factors in healing and maintaining a healthy immune system. New research published in the Journal of Behavioural Medicine suggests that yoga can be a helpful way to boost your immune system and reduce inflammation in the body.

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