

ROLE OF YOGA IN MENOPAUSE-A SCIENTIFIC STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Menopause is a stage which is present in every woman's life. Menopause simply means stoppage of menses. Clinically natural menopause is diagnosed retrospectively after twelve consecutive months of amenorrhea. It nearly appears above age of forty-five to fifty years. Going through this stage, she experiences many health problems such as osteoporosis, emotional changes, hot flashes etc. During this stage her health is badly affected. Menopausal symptoms not only affect the physical health but also mental and family health. Hormonal level in her body get imbalanced. In India, women are not aware about menopausal symptoms. In modern treatment, hormonal replacement therapy is used. It suppresses the menopausal symptoms but many study shown that it causes many serious health problems to women.

Hence, we have to find natural therapy for it. Yoga improves health, give mental and physical strength. Yoga can reduce anxiety distress, blood pressure, fatigue and increases pain tolerance level. Thus, Yoga also beneficial in menopausal symptoms. Yoga can be used as non-hormonal therapy. So, it can't develop any health related hazards and along with it maintain physical and mental health of women. Yoga includes *Aasana*, *Pranayama* (control breathing) and *Dhyana*(meditation). Yogic postures can relax the nervous system and improve hormonal fluctuations. Therefore, the aim 'Role of yoga in menopausal symptoms'

of this paper is to aware all women about 'Yoga' which is done during menopausal age to reduce its symptoms and protect her welfare and enjoy her menopausal life happily.

KEYWORDS: Menopause, Yoga, Asana, Pranayama, Dhyana.

INTRODUCTION

The word menopause itself indicates that 'meno' means menses and 'pause' means stop. It is a normal condition. All women experiences that condition as they age.^[1] It is the end of her reproductive life.^[2] A woman born with a finite number of eggs, which are stored in ovaries.^[3] Ovaries produces hormones oestrogen and progesterone, which control menstruation and ovulation.^[4] Oestrogen regulates menstruation, while progesterone is more involve with preparing the body for pregnancy.^[5] When ovaries start producing less amount of these hormones, perimenopause will begin.^[6] When ovaries stop to produce egg and menstruation get stopped, and menopause occurs. The clinical diagnosis is confirmed following stoppage of menstruation for twelve consecutive months without any pelvic pathology.^[7]

Some women experiences menopause early.^[8] It is called as 'premature menopause'.^[9] It caused by factors such as enzyme deficiency, Down's syndrome, Turner's syndrome, Addison's disease, hypothyroidism, removal of ovaries (bilateral oophorectomy), radiotherapy to pelvic area, chemotherapy, hysterectomy surgery.^[10] Menopausal symptoms include hot flashes (a sudden feeling of warmth) that spreads over upper body often with blushing and some sweating.^[11] Other symptoms are irregular periods, insomnia, mood swings, fatigue, depression, irritability, racing heart, headache, changes in libido, vaginal dryness, bladder control problem. Around 20% of patients suffer from severe menopausal symptoms, 60% suffer from mild symptoms and 20% have no symptoms at all.^[12] Menopause affect not only her physical state but also her mental health. Treatment of menopause includes non -hormonal and hormonal treatment.^[13] The HRT is indicated in menopausal women to overcome the short-term and long term consequences of oestrogen deficiency.^[14] However, HRT has been associated with increased risk of breast cancer, uterine cancer, thromboembolic heart disease, stroke and CVD. Considering the limitation of HRT, the present need to explore new option for management of menopausal symptoms in the form of non-hormonal drug therapy.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Yoga

It is derived from Sanskrit word *Yuj*, means to join.^[15] Yoga means union of the individual consciousness/soul with universal consciousness/ spirit.^[16] It is an ancient art based on harmonizing system of development for the body, mind and spirit.^[17] Regular practice of Yoga promotes strength, endurance, flexibility and facilitates characteristics of friendliness, compassion, and greater self-control, while cultivating a sense of calmness and well-being.^[18] During menopause women experiences emotional and physical fluctuations throughout their lives as a part of natural aging process.^[19] Yoga can serve as useful tool to help to regulate hormones.^[20] Yoga postures, *Pranayama* and meditation are effective techniques to release stress.^[21] Yoga is recognized as a form of mind-body medicine that integrate individuals physical, mental and spiritual components to improve aspects of health, particularly stress related illness.^[22] Yoga practitioners can tend to have higher pain tolerance.^[23] Attention on breathing and position of tongue to the roof of palate during practice allows mind to become more calm and stabilized.^[24] It may reduce hot flashes like symptom. It reduces blood pressure and promotes oxygenation and blood circulation in body.^[25] Yoga has been proven to help people suffer from problems associated with joints, such as arthritis.^[26] Regular Yoga practice, stretches and tones the body muscle and make them strong.^[27]

Yoga Useful in Menopausal Symptoms

- 1) **Suryanamaskara (Sun Salutation):** It stretches the muscle of whole body. It is combination of twelve graceful poses practiced as one continuous exercise.^[28] It helps to increase flexibility in joints and relieves general ache.^[29]
- 2) **Shalabhasana (Locust Pose):** This exercise energizes the entire female reproductive tract, thyroid, liver. It is useful for women with dysfunctional bleeding, as well as menopausal symptoms. It improves circulation and oxygenation to the pelvic region.^[30]
- 3) **Dhanurasana (Bow Pose):** This exercise helps relieve menopause related fatigue and lack of vitality, elevating mood and improving stamina.^[31]
- 4) **Tadasana:** It makes stronger and toned thighs, ankles and arms. It is good for better circulation, lowers tension and stress levels.^[32]
- 5) **Uttanasana (Standing Forward Bending Pose):** A mild inversion pose, this is commonly used to combat osteoporosis and for better sleep.^[33] It calms the brain and helps to relieve stress and mind depression. It is beneficial in headache and anxiety.^[34]

- 6) **Paschimottasana (Seated Forward Bend Pose):** This pose could help for better sleep. It also wards off fatigue and prepares you to deal with menopause issues in a better way. It calms down mind.^[35] It helps for alleviating stress and mind depression and can also relieve menstrual pain, fatigue and insomnia.^[36]
- 7) **Balasana (Child's Pose):** Relax like child with your forehead resting on the mat while your hands relax alongside your body. It is an essential pose advocated to induce a sense of calmness and relaxation. It relieves lower back and neck pain occur due to osteoporosis.^[37]
- 8) **Ardhapawanmuktasana (Half Wind Relieving Pose):** It is powerful, gentle stretch offered to the mind and lower back as well as hips. The entire muscle of that region get a good massage and stretch, soothing out the back ache. It eases menstrual discomfort.^[38]
- 9) **Bhujangasana (Cobra Pose):** It strengthen and tones the back muscle and tissues along the vertebrae, therefore relieving any tension aches and pains in lower back.^[39]
- 10) **Shavasana (Corpse Pose):** It is not just a relaxation pose, but it allows you to create an awareness about your body and breathing pattern. It trains the mind, minimize the tension, awakens creativity, enhances memory.^[40]
- 11) **Baddhakonasana (Cobbler Pose):** It stimulates abdominal organs, ovaries and bladder. It smoothen menstrual discomfort. It stimulates heart and improve general circulation. It helps to relieve mind depression, anxiety and fatigue.^[41]
- 12) **Adhomukh Svanasana (Downward Facing Dog Pose):** It energizes the body, stretches the shoulder, hamstrings, calves, arches and hands. It helps to prevent osteoporosis. It improves digestion, relieves insomnia, headache, back pain.^[42]
- 13) **Halasana (Plow Pose):** This *Aasana* helps to combat anxiety and irritability by calming the mind.^[43]
- 14) **Utrasana (Camel Pose):** The arching posture is helpful for relieving backache that may be caused by menopause. The camel pose can ward off menstrual pain, anxiety and fatigue.^[44]
- 15) **Setu Bandha Sarvangasana (Bridge Pose):** An excellent spine elongating pose that's more gentle than the full wheel pose. The bridge is an excellent way to relieve stress and target many symptoms of menopause in one pose. It stretches the back, relieve fatigue, insomnia, anxiety.^[45]
- 16) **Supta Badha Konasana (Reclining Bound Angle Pose) & Supta Vajrasana (Reclined Thunderbolt Pose):** It allows the abdomen to soften and any tightness in the chest is release. It helps to relieve hot flashes.^[46]

DISCUSSION

Menopausal phase is a very important in women's life. 66-80% women experience menopausal symptoms. Serious health problems are faced due to HRT. So there is a need for alternative option for this. Yoga should have recommended to all women of menopausal age. It is an effective, non-invasive therapy.

Yoga has energy to fight against various type of health related problems. It improves our physical and mental health. It makes us energized and stress free. As Yoga is effective in our day today life. It can be also beneficial in menopausal related symptoms.

CONCLUSION

In this era of industrialization, the life style of mankind changed drastically. This is the main reason for various diseases. To overcome this, advanced techniques also available. But they have their own limitations and life threatening side effects also. On other hand, Yoga is ancient and valuable gift from India's tradition. It has power to improve immunity and health. Thus, by following Yoga regularly can give benefits in menopausal symptoms and leads to better menopausal life.

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