

# Yoga Therapy - an Effective Solution for Menopausal Problems

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## Abstract

Perimenopausal and Postmenopausal symptoms can be defined as a group of unpleasant symptoms which a woman experiences immediately before and after cessation of menstruation. These symptoms include hot flushes followed by sweating, paraesthesiae, which take the form of sensations of pins & needles in the extremities, headaches, irritability and depression. Apart from these, many physiological symptoms also appear which include pain in joints, backache etc. This article would endeavor to understand the psychophysiological aspects of perimenopausal syndrome and how yogic practices and nature cure treatments can help to relieve these symptoms and offer an effective, safe and cost-effective cure as has been claimed by various yoga gurus and nature cure practitioners.

**Key words:** Perimenopausal, Yoga, Nature cure

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## **Yoga Therapy for Menopausal Problems**

### **Introduction:**

World Health Organization defines as “a state of well being on physical, mental, social and spiritual aspects and not merely an absence of disease.

Health is the overall feeling of comfort at different aspects of personality. It is the state when the individual is at ease with his/her own body and mind. At the same time, he/she should be able to cope up with his internal and external environment. Thus, it can be summarized that Health can be a term used for complete psycho-physiological state of well being and comfort.

From before puberty to after menopause, a woman's body is constantly changing and developing. Overall health in a woman includes her reproductive or gynecological health as well. A sound gynecological health can only ensure a sound reproductive health, which will result in healthy progeny. Women of reproductive age come across a number of issues relating to gynecological health. Many of the conditions that affect gynecological, reproductive, and sexual health may be detected early which provides for a more positive prognosis and successful treatment.

The area of research in India shows growing awareness of the need to rethink about the women, which suffer in their personnel & family life because of the symptoms experienced before menstrual cycle and after menopause.

### **Menopausal issues in females**

Perimenopausal and Postmenopausal symptoms are the most frequent symptoms experienced by women between 40 to 50 years of age.

Perimenopausal and Postmenopausal symptoms can be defined as a group of unpleasant symptoms which a woman experiences after cessation of menstruation. These symptoms include hot flushes followed by sweating, paraesthesiae, which take the form of sensations of pins & needles in the extremities, headaches, irritability and depression. Apart from these, many physiological symptoms also appear which include pain in joints, backache etc.

Perimenopausal period can be termed as the period around one year before the menopause comes. This period is characterized by irregularity of periods mainly and is associated with the increase in weight, recurrent infections etc.

The increasing awareness among health about all the aspects of their health have resulted in a positive trend. More & more cases are being reported for seeking treatment and counseling for management of such issues. This has also motivated the researchers to analyze the causes and also devise safe, economic and effective interventions for its management. Many works have been done to detect and treat these symptoms by researchers in India and abroad by using various therapies, ranging from conventional allopathic treatment to alternative therapies like acupuncture & yoga etc.

In an open, cross sectional, observational and descriptive study done by Juan Enrique M. Blümel, Camil Castelo-Branco, María J. Cancelo, Andrea T. Córdova at the university of Barcelona, using Greene scale for climacteric symptoms, Cooper questionnaire for psychosomatic symptoms of stress, Smilkstein family apgar for family dysfunction, Duke-UNC questionnaire for

social support and Israel scale for vital events has proved that psychological symptoms are frequent in the perimenopause and are associated to vasomotor symptoms. This observation links psychological symptoms with menopausal transition and might suggest an organic base in their origin. The negative psychosocial environment is a factor that favors the development of these symptoms.

In another study conducted by Manisha Singh Ph.D. (Psychology) and Girish Singh Ph.D. (Statistics) of centre for women's studies and development, Banaras Hindu University used Hindi adaptation of General Health Questionnaire (GHQ) and Psycho Social Stress Scale (PSSS). The present study observed low to moderate level of anxiety, depression, social dysfunction and somatic symptoms as well as psycho-social stress in middle-aged women.

It has been observed that stress, life style changes and increased responsibilities of women have exposed them to tremendous pressure, both physical as well as mental. This has led to abrupt and unnatural changes in their body. Not only Yoga and Nature Cure but even the modern medical science believes that stress leads to a number of hormonal changes in body which imbalances the normal functioning of the body. Even the Fight and Flight reaction due to adrenaline production proves the same. It is well known fact that reproductive function is ceased during the Fight and Flight reaction. Prolonged stress adversely affects the menstrual functions.

It is now a well established fact that stress is the case of many menstrual problems ranging from temporary Amenorrhoea to Dysmenorrhoea, severe pain faced by the girl during the menstrual cycle.

This also holds true for a number of psychological & physiological symptom which most women face before and after menopause.

### **Yoga as an effective therapy for menopausal problems**

Yoga is the science of right living and, as such, is intended to be incorporated in daily life. It works on all aspects of the person: the physical, vital mental, emotional, psychic and spiritual.

The word yoga means 'unity' or 'oneness' and is derived from the Sanskrit work **Yuj** which means '**to join**'. This unity or joining is described in spiritual terms as the union of the individual consciousness with the universal consciousness. On a more practical level, yoga is a means of balancing and harmonizing the body, mind and emotions.

Concept and practice of yoga originated in India several thousand years ago. Its founders were great saints and sages. The great yogis gave rational interpretation to their experiences of yoga and brought about a practically and scientifically sound method within every one's reach.

Yoga is one among the six systems of Vedic philosophy. Maharshi Patanjali, rightly called "The father of yoga" compiled and refined various aspects of yoga systematically in his "Yoga sutras". He advocated "*Ashtanga yoga*", the eight-fold path which is believed to have a potential for improvement of physical health by encouraging better circulation of oxygenated blood in the body and inducing serenity of mind. The practice of yoga prevents psychosomatic disorders and improves an individual's resistance and ability to endure stressful situations.

Yoga is a method by which one can develop one's inherent powers in a balanced manner. The science of yoga begins to work on the outermost aspect of the personality, the physical body. Yoga aims at bringing the different bodily functions into perfect coordination so that they work for the good of the whole body. From the physical body, yoga moves on to the mental and emotional levels.

Yoga as a therapy, works on the overall personality of a man which conventional therapy can never accomplish. So, while treating the physical problems it also deals with the mental problems which may be the root cause of the physical problem. Thus, Yoga acts on the complete spirituo-psychophysiological aspect of personality and through its integrated approach ensure development of a physiologically sound and psychologically balanced personality.

Yogic practices have always been found to give relief to patients not only from the physical & physiological problems but also from the stress and other psychological symptoms related to perimenopausal like irritability, anxiety and depression. It is hypothesized that yogic practices bring about a number of psycho-physiological changes in body including variations in hormonal levels of the blood.

A daily yogic regimen for management of menopausal symptoms should include following practices:

- Practice of Sukshma yogic exercises for 5 min. to improve blood circulation throughout the body.
- Practice of Butterfly poses for 5 min. to strengthen pelvic and perineal muscles.
- Practice of Asanas for 30 min. which includes Marjariasana, Ardhamatsyendrasana, Bhadrasana, Katichakrasana, Dhanurasana, Yoga

mudra, Brahma mudra, Sarvangasana, Matsyasana, Bhujangasana, Shalabhasana. Regular practice of asanas strengthens pelvic and perineal muscles, increase blood circulation to the reproductive organs and regulate hormonal secretions. This helps to improve health of these organs.

- Practice of Pranayamas for 20 min. which includes Anuloma Viloma, Bhramari, Ujjayi. Pranayamas help to establish synchronization between sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems, reduce stress and develop a positive attitude towards life.
- Practice of Ashvini mudra for 5 min. to strengthen pelvic and perineal muscles.
- Practice of Kapalabhati for 5 min. to promote effective elimination and also to regulate body weight.

### Conclusion:

Health is the concern of each and every person. The scope of application of yogic practices for health and fitness has been increasing day by day. Also the therapeutic aspect of yoga has become very popular as an alternative method of treatment in various diseases of modern times. Yogic practices can be used as physiological and psychological procedures for psychosomatic fitness to prevent various injuries in some activities and help in the rehabilitation of the injured and ill persons if learnt under the proper guidance and practiced judiciously. Yogic practices are also very useful to get perfect health and fitness and thereby improving the performance in various daily activities.

With changing lifestyle and ever increasing stress level, it has become important that a side effect less and at the same time cost effective

therapy should be established in every hospital and clinic.

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