



Karuna Yoga Newsletter

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YOGA THERAPY

Yoga's system of healing is based on the premise that the body should be allowed to function as naturally as possible. Practising the recommended asanas (postures) for any particular ailment will first rejuvenate your body and then tackle the causes of the ailment.

When we have pain, inflammation or progressive deterioration in the joints for example, we need to look beyond the immediate problem and try to find out what is going on in the rest of the body. There could be structural problems that have to do with physical alignment of the bones and mechanical balance between the muscles. There could be problems with the internal organs involving digestion, circulation, the lymphatic and nervous system and the autoimmune system.

How the Therapy Works

The process of yoga therapy is based on selecting and sequencing asanas, which stretch specified parts of the body, and block others. You must remember, however, that in the case of serious or congenital disabilities, yoga asanas may not bring a full recovery, but can still alleviate some of the suffering associated with the condition.

Another benefit of yoga therapy is that it has been known to raise the threshold of pain and endurance. This only happens, however, if the recommended asanas are practised with patience and dedication.

Ailments, whether minor or major, affect the body. Yoga can help to cure these ailments but the pace and effectiveness of the cure depends on the type of ailment, its progression, the person's constitution and the commitment to the treatment.

Asanas

Yoga asanas involve movements that stimulate injured parts of the body by increasing the blood supply to them. Asanas are based on the simple principles of stretching, bending, rotating and relaxing. They are aimed at purifying and strengthening each organ, bone and cell of the body. Yoga is a combination of physiotherapy, psychotherapy and spiritual therapy.

The Brain and the Body

A very important aspect of yoga therapy is that it teaches us to control the effect of the brain upon the body. Practising yoga teaches the brain to be calm and passive, to accept and subdue pain, not fight it. The energy that is otherwise dissipated in coping with stress and pain is diverted to healing.

Ultimately, the aim of yoga therapy is to teach the brain and body to work in harmony. Specific asanas work on the various systems of the body. Do not get discouraged if the healing of your ailment takes time. Remember, perseverance is the essence of yoga.

Every month I will write about a particular ailment and give you a series of asanas designed to help this ailment. The asana sequences will be taken from the book "**The Path to Holistic Health**" by **B.K.S Iyengar**.

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MUSCLES BONES AND JOINTS (Part 1)

The human body is composed of bone and muscle. The bones that make up the skeletal frame of the body are attached to each other by joints, which are held in place by strong ligaments and muscles. A muscle contracts or relaxes to move the bones connected to it. Better muscle function means a fitter, stronger body. Practising yoga strengthens the bones, improves co-ordination of the muscles and provides a non-invasive way of treating ailments that affect both.

The relatively common ailments related to bones and muscles are physical fatigue, muscle cramps, backache, osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis. This month we will look at physical fatigue.





Physical fatigue

Stressful physical exertion brings on this condition, characterised by exhaustion and a reluctance to exert oneself. If unrelieved by rest, and the removal of stress factors, the condition may lead to chronic fatigue syndrome.

Another major cause of fatigue is anaemia and weakness of the liver. If the fatigue is due to anaemia, eating iron-rich foods and blood builders such as pomegranate juice, grapes or grape juice, and beetroots or beetroot/carrot juice can help.

To strengthen the liver it is recommended that you practice **Surya Pranayama**. This is right-nostril breathing. Sit in a comfortable position. Close your left nostril using the two outside fingers of your right hand and inhale through your right nostril. Then close the right nostril using your thumb and exhale through the left. Continue in this manner, inhale right, and exhale left, for 1 to 3 minutes. This pranayama stimulates the liver, which plays an important role in building the blood.

Asanas to Help Relieve Physical Fatigue

<p>SUPTA BADDHAKONASANA You can practise this posture using cushions under your knees or using a belt around your lower back and then over your toes as we practise in our yoga classes. Close your eyes and breathe slowly and deeply.</p>	
<p>SUPTA PADANGUSTHASANA Once you have stretched your hamstrings with your leg straight up, you can take your leg out to the side. Then change legs.</p>	
<p>UPAVISTA KONASANA Practise this posture holding a belt around each foot if you are not yet able to hold your toes.</p>	
<p>ADHOMUKHA SVANASANA (Downward Dog) Spread your fingers, lift your sitting bones and stretch your heels onto or down toward the floor.</p>	
<p>VIPARITA KARANI One of your favourite postures – legs up the wall. Close your eyes and breathe slowly and deeply. Stay in this posture for about five minutes.</p>	
<p>SAVASANA Relax your body and mind. Breathe softly and quietly. Stay in this final posture for about ten minutes.</p>	