

4 yoga poses for diabetes

Mumbai Mirror | Mar 30, 2015, 12:00 AM IST



Yoga for diabetes

Follow these simple pranayams and asanas to control blood glucose levels

Study after study at top Western universities confirm and reiterate what our ancient science has been preaching all along -that positive health effects of yoga are bountiful.

For one, yoga stimulates the organs which in turn improves metabolic activities. This means that the chemical transformations within a cell are carried out more efficiently. This makes it a highly beneficial exercise for those suffering from diabetes -a complex condition which occurs due to lack of insulin production by the pancreas or lack of cell response to insulin, resulting in a multitude of metabolic imbalances involving the regulation and utilisation of insulin and glucose (sugar) in the body.

In fact, a study published in the journal, Evidence-Based Complementary and Alternative Medicine, last year analysed available research looking at yoga's influence on diabetes and complications of diabetes (for instance, kidney problems and high blood pressure) and found that regular yoga practise led to shorter term improvements in fasting glucose and cholesterol levels. The research, conducted by Marshall Govindan and Dr Emilia RipollBunn, also found that the direct stimulation of the pancreas by certain postures rejuvenated its capacity to produce insulin.

Yoga practitioner Sabir Shaikh adds, "A few asanas help balance the functioning of the endocrine system. It massages and tones the abdominal organs like pancreas and liver, stimulate the nervous and circulatory system which in turn helps in controlling diabetes."

Diabetologist Dr Pradeep Gadge concurs. "Besides medication", he says, "Yogic asanas help in harmonising the body, breath and mind, thereby contributing to the overall health of the individual. Asanas help in optimal secretions of the endocranial glands which helps insulin in the body to be used more effectively."

Studies have also confirmed that practising certain asanas such as Ardha Matsyendrasana (half-twist pose) combined with Dhanurasana (bow pose), Vakrasana (twisted pose), Matsyendrasana (half-spinal twist), Halasana (plough pose) squeezes and compresses the abdomen and helps stimulate the pancreatic secretions or hormonal secretions. As a result, more insulin is pushed into the system. This rejuvenates the insulin producing beta cells in the pancreas of diabetics suffering from both type 1 and 2. Practising the postures in a relaxed manner, without exertion, meditation and breathing techniques help most patients control the triggers or causes of diabetes.

Asanas over high-intensity workout

A study, by S A Ramalah in Washington, compared the effects of exercise such as walking, jogging on a treadmill, static cycling with asanas such as Upavishta Bakasana (sitting crane), Bakasana (standing crane) and Dhanurasana. It was found that these asanas were the most effective as they helped stimulate the hormonal secretion of the pancreas and rejuvenate its capacity to produce insulin. They also strengthened the back muscles which enhance toning of abdominal viscera (muscles and internal organs). The balancing in Bakasana improves interaction between the pituitary gland and pancreas.

Breath of life

Aside from asanas, breathing exercises especially anulom vilom (alternate nostril breathing) and kapalbatti (one-time inhale; exhale 30 to 50 times quickly) is extremely beneficial. Anulom vilom is found useful in diabetes as alternate nostril breathing has calming effects on the nervous system, facilitating homeostasis (internal equilibrium in the function of all the systems). This manages the stress levels, helping in diabetes treatment.

Kapalbhatti, on the other hand, stimulates the pancreas to release insulin, thus helping control diabetes. Pranayam makes the mind calm, thus balancing the interaction between the pituitary gland and the pancreas. Kapalabhati combined with Nauli

Kriya (pressure manipulations and isolation of abdominal-recti muscles) help control blood sugar. These practices balance the Basic Metabolic Rate (BMR) which in turn helps stabilise sugar levels.

"Once you are through with the practice, relax in shavasana (lying flat on the ground) to cool off," advises Shaikh. "A yogic diet that is high in fibre, whole grains, legumes and vegetables complements the regimen. It is recommended to lose excess weight and stabilise blood sugar levels."

Bear in mind

Throughout the programme, monitor glucose levels under the supervision of a physician, and take appropriate medication as prescribed.

- Practise yoga in the morning and evening for 40 to 60 minutes with the recommended series of postures according to one's capacity.
- The maintenance period of postures should be increased gradually from five seconds to a minute, or even longer, depending on the posture and capacity of the person.
- Always focus on breathing during the maintenance period of the posture.

Tried and tested

When 38-year-old Manish Chaturvedi was diagnosed with case of borderline diabetes (medically termed as pre-diabetes), a condition characterised by the presence of blood glucose levels that are higher than normal but not high enough to be classified as diabetes, he was advised by his doctor to take up yoga.

If undiagnosed or untreated, pre-diabetes can develop into type 2 diabetes. Chaturvedi, a healthcare professional was also asked to change his sedentary lifestyle. "My mother is diabetic. When she introduced yoga in her routine, it helped control her sugar levels," he says.

Chaturvedi began with yoga and pranayam Chaturvedi began with yoga and pranaya after his sugar hit a high. "I practised

pranayam, which included anulom vilom, kapalbati, mandukasan and ardha chakrasana (in pic) for 30 minutes every day."

After three months of regular practise, Chaturvedi found that his practise, Chaturvedi found that his sugar levels were returned to the normal margin.

Follow these four key yoga postures

Vrikshasana

Benefit:

Helps stimulate the hormonal secretion of the pancreas.

Method

- Stand straight and keep your feet close to each other. Your knees, legs and hand should be held straight.
- Now bring your right foot and keep it on your left thigh. Try to make a right angle. If you are unable to keep your foot on the thigh, try to keep your foot on the left leg wherever you feel comfortable and maintain balance. But remember your right toe should point down wards. Your body balance should depend on the left leg.
- Join your palms and bring them to the middle of your chest and keep the figure pointing upwards. Slowly move your hands overhead. Raise your arms over your head. Your arms should be slightly bent.
- Stand straight, look in front and try to be relaxed.
- Stay in this position for about 10 seconds. Breathe normally.
- Slowly bring your hands in the middle portion of the chest same as before, bring your right leg to the ground and come back in the starting position. -Repeat the same procedure with the other leg.
- Try to repeat the whole procedure two to three times.

Dhanurasana (Bow pose)