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Review Article

### YOGA – A BOON FOR ORAL HEALTH

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### ABSTRACT

Yoga is the process of harmonizing the body, mind, and breath through the coordination of various physical postures with specific breathing and meditation techniques. It is the synchronization of the breath with the movements of the body. Regular practice of Yoga helps to decrease stress and anxiety as well as relieves dentist from musculoskeletal disorders. Yoga was more effective than other modes of physical activities like aerobics and sports. Yoga doesn't require long sessions and can be carried out during short breaks and in times between two treatments.

**Keywords:** Yoga, Stress, Physical, Mental, Emotional, Musculoskeletal disorders.

### INTRODUCTION

Derived from the Sanskrit word 'yuj', means 'to unite' yoga is the age old science of merging the individual consciousness or soul with the universal consciousness or spirit<sup>1</sup>. Yoga is a hindu spiritual and ascetic discipline, a part of which, including breath control, simple meditation, and the adoption of specific bodily postures, is widely practiced for health and relaxation<sup>2</sup>.

Yoga is understood to be an over 3000 years old practice having its origin in India aiming to transform body and mind. In the past few years, yoga has steadily gained popularity amongst western and far eastern countries, as a holistic system of connecting mind and soul. Several studies have reported beneficial effects of yoga on anxiety, stress reduction and general well being of individuals<sup>3</sup>.

### DISCUSSION

Dentistry is the profession that faces unique physical, mental and emotional challenges each day. Dealing with fearful patients, uncooperative team members, and the frustrations of running a small business can sometimes become overwhelming and lead to powerful feelings of anxiety, anger, and even depression. Dentist faces the complications of the spine such as cervical spondylosis, tendonitis, arthritis, pain in the leg due to unequal load owing to prolonged standing

causing varicose veins in the lower limbs, eye problems due to continual, persistent concentration in the oral cavity even when the light is dim, skin diseases like contact dermatitis due to skin contact with various types of chemicals<sup>4</sup>.

One of the obvious benefits of yoga is improved flexibility, but the postures also build muscle strength. That additional muscle strength, particularly of the critical core musculature, is balanced by the increased flexibility to help improve posture, both when sitting and when moving through space. This, in turn, reduces strain on the back, neck, shoulders, and other muscles and joints, which decreases the practitioner's chance of developing future degenerative musculoskeletal conditions. **Bhujangasan** is one of the asanas which make the spine flexible and revitalizes the spinal cord. **Padmasana** also work wonders for the spinal cord by keeping it erect, healthy and flexible. **Sirshasana** can help both normal and diseased eyes by producing increased blood circulation in the organ. It also prevents the development of long and short sightedness. **Vajrasana** helps in majority cases of varicose veins<sup>2,4</sup>.

Yoga improves blood flow by increasing your heart rate and delivering more oxygen to your cells, which then function better. While some styles of yoga can get you into an aerobic target range, studies have shown that even those that don't can improve your cardiovascular conditioning<sup>4,5</sup>.

While it is the positive physical impact that initially draws many people to yoga, it is the mental and emotional benefits that effect the people most. It was the meditative practices that

would lead to the ultimate goal of yoga, which was a calming of the “fluctuations of the mind.” As all dentists know, there are numerous times during our normal day when those “fluctuations” lead to stress and anxiety. Yoga lowers levels of the stress hormone cortisol, leading to greater sense of well-being and self-control. This, in turn, improves performance, regardless of the setting<sup>6</sup>.

Another important and beneficial component of yoga is its emphasis on the present moment. Regular practice of yoga and meditation can significantly improve concentration, and this improved focus helps practitioners decrease the chance of reacting negatively to challenging circumstances that arise. It allows us to truly be “the calm in the eye of the storm.” This increased awareness can help us identify and break free of destructive habits ranging from chronic anger, fear, and frustration, to addictions such as smoking<sup>7</sup>.

The best thing about yoga is that it is not rigorous and doesn't require long sessions, but can be carried out during short breaks, in times between two patients, or while waiting for a filling to set. Consistently and appropriately done small bouts of yoga can prove to be as effective as long sessions. Children are motivated to perform yogic practices like shitali and sheetkari prayanama that produce correct alignment of teeth avoiding their irregular development. Yoga also helps in prevention and cure of lichen planus, a premalignant oral condition which is prevalent in today's modern lifestyle due to increased incidence of psychosomatic disorders<sup>6,7</sup>.

The study by **Koneru and Tanikonda** (2015)<sup>8</sup> found that yoga was more effective than other modes of physical activities like aerobics, brisk walk, sports, etc. They reported that 89.5% of yoga practitioners were free of musculoskeletal pain compared to those who didn't practice yoga.

Yoga allows the practitioners to be more regular, irrespective of the factors such as weather, climate, place, accessibility, and affordability of costs. The benefits of Yoga greatly contribute to preventive dentistry. Practicing Yoga also helps to focus on ourselves and to forget about the problems and worries that we have<sup>8</sup>.

## CONCLUSION

The key benefit of Yoga is a greater perception of life; it leads into a change of habits and behaviors, and significantly improves the quality of life. Thus devoting 20-25 minutes on an average every day will give surprising results keeping one mentally and physically fit. Dentist can get many benefits from yoga that will result in quiet positive changes in practice, interpersonal relationships and the world.

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