

## Yoga and Hypothyroidism

Sir,

The concept of patient centered care (PCC) and patient oriented symptom management in hypothyroid disease has been discussed earlier by Thyroid Research and Practice. Abnormal anxiety levels have been observed in patients with thyroid disease.[1] As a solution to these complex issues, there is a need to innovate and utilize alternate therapy which provides a holistic approach to the management of hypothyroidism. Yoga, the ancient Indian science may offer one such option.

Yoga is an age old science aimed at striking a balance between the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects of the health of the individual.[2] Much before the evolution of modern endocrinology, ancient Indian medicine hypothesized the presence of seven chakras (nerve plexuses), which included the *Vishuddha* chakra representing the thyroid. Appropriate yoga techniques have been created to optimal, holistic including endocrine, health.[3]

Various yoga practices that have been found beneficial and known to improve quality of life in hypothyroid subjects are following[4]:

1. Basic stretches and loosening exercises.
2. Asanas- meaning ūrm and pleasant posture of body.
  - *Pavanmuktaasana*: Press knee and thigh of one leg against chest and belly.
  - *Matsyasana*: Spread the legs one foot apart, fold the left leg in the knee and place it on the right thigh. Fold the right leg in the knee and place it on left thigh. Now raise the head, make arch of the back and hold the toes of the feet.
  - *Bhujangasan*: Keep the palms firmly on the floor and raise the head and trunk up backwards.

- *Shavasana*: Lie down flat on the ground, and close your eyes.
3. Pranayam - control of breathing – or prana.
    - *Anulom-Vilom*: Inhale exhale through one nostril, alternating both left and right.
    - *Kapalbhati*: Inhale exhale deeply, contract abdominal muscles to maximum.
    - *Bhramari*: Inhale deeply, followed by a forceful expiration through both nostrils.
  4. Bandha- sealing the energy. Jalandhara bandh - Contract the muscles of the neck and press the chin firmly on to the jugular notch.

Yoga improves the state of health by positive alteration of cardiovascular, nervous, and endocrine system.[5] Also, Yoga may alleviate the symptoms of anxiety and depression, especially in women, thus ensuring better patient health. One month of yogic exercises at sea level has been observed to cause a significant reduction in the trans-thyroidal availability of radioiodine.[6] Hypothyroidism affects respiratory muscle strength which is linearly related to the thyroid hormone levels. Thus Pranayama and meditation has beneficial effect on pulmonary functions of hypothyroid patients along with conventional treatment.[7]

Swami, Gaurav, *et al.* "Effect of yoga on pulmonary function tests of hypothyroid patients." *Indian J Physiol Pharmacol* 54.1 (2010): 51.

Through this letter, we hope to stimulate the readers of *Thyroid Research Practice* go beyond the conventional treatment regimens of hypothyroidism, and consider the use of Yoga as an added therapy in alleviating hypothyroid symptoms, and ensuring better patient satisfaction.

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### References

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