

Surya Namaskar – A Route to Healthy Living

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Abstract

Surya Namaskar, as the name suggests is a 'salute to the sun'. It can do wonders to body, if performed in the right way. It is widely believed that one can control mind and body through Surya Namaskar. It also helps to improve concentration and focus when practiced on a regular basis. Disease as the name suggests - not at ease (Dis-ease). According to Ayurveda, it occurs because of an imbalance of Vata (Air), Kapha (Phlegm), and Pitta (Bile) in the body. Surya Namaskar maintains the equilibrium of these elements and hence, perfect health. We use only 35-40% of our muscles to carry out our daily activities, whereas 95% of our muscles are active while doing Surya Namaskar.

Keywords: Surya Namaskar, Ayurveda etc.

Benefits of Surya Namaskar, is as follows

- Improves your posture
- Strengthens your muscles
- Burns extra calories
- Improves blood circulation
- Boosts endurance power
- Regulates sleep disorders
- Improves hair growth
- Regulates irregular periods
- Helps synchronize your breath
- Improves flexibility
- Relieves stiffness
- Keeps you physically fit
- Stimulates the cardiovascular system
- Improves function of the heart
- Benefits Endocrine system
- Decrease diastolic pressure
- Eases stress

1. Pranamam

Standing in an erect position, well balanced on both feet, with the vision focused on the tip of the nose, helps in improving concentration. Breathing normally, both arms in namaskar position and parallel to the ground, with shoulders stretched back, helps in strengthening the shoulder and back muscles. Keeping the neck, spine and legs in one line perpendicular to the ground helps to prevent the tendency of sitting or standing with bent back & drooping shoulders.



2. HasthaUthanam



Inhaling deeply, while lifting the arms above the head and bending back, helps in expanding all the parts of thoracic cage, and inflating all the lobes of the lungs. Air passes

through nostrils, nasopharynx and trachea, into smaller and smaller sub-divisions. This helps in making the exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide in the respiratory passages easy and reduces the dead space, making the respiratory apparatus healthy and preventing the development of respiratory problems like emphysema. Shoulder joints are moved to their maximum range, helping to avoid peri-arthritis of shoulder joints (Frozen shoulder).

3. Padahastham



Exhaling to the maximum while bending forward, with both palms touching the ground, forehead touching the knees, chin touching the sternum, while the legs and knees are kept straight and firm, results in a good amount of stretch on the muscles of the calf, back of thighs, lower back as well as forearms.

As the air in the airway is being completely exhaled, the diaphragm ascends into the chest cavity, compressing the lungs. This results in pressure on the blood vessels and blood is pushed out of the thoracic cage. In posture two lungs are filled with blood, while in the third posture the process is reversed. This assists circulation of blood all over the body.

Expansion and deflation of the lungs helps in bringing the elasticity of the lung tissue back to normal.

4. Ashwasanchalanam



Inhaling deeply while taking the left leg backwards, touching the knee and toes to the ground, right thigh touching the rib cage, hands and elbows remaining straight and steady, chest brought to front, shoulders and

head tilted back, eyes directed to the sky, back forming a concave curve, results in considerable stretch to many joints and muscles. Such stretch is extremely beneficial to the lymphatic circulation.

5. Santholanam



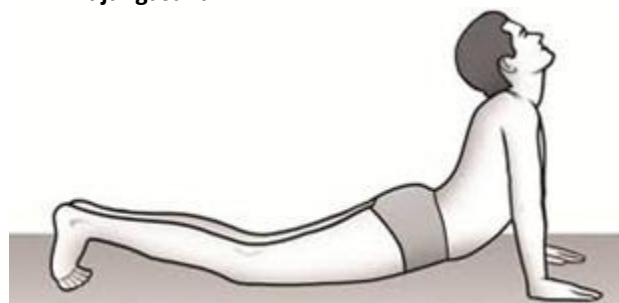
In this posture, breath is exhaled fully, while taking the right leg back, both feet are kept together, legs and hands are held straight, with vision on the ground at 90° and the whole body is balanced on palms and toes. In this posture the spine is kept straight, which helps in exercising spinal extensors. Balancing the full weight of the body on hands and toes helps to strengthen the wrist and hand muscles. Soorya Namaskar is a dynamic exercise, with alternate stretching and contraction. Muscles do not become big in size or fibers do not thicken. However, body muscles do become strong. In addition flexibility and reflex actions are maintained and body metabolism is promoted. All the limbs of the body get fully exercised. This is why Soorya Namaskar is known as 'Sarvang Sunder Vyayam.'

6. Ashtanga Pranamam



In posture five, breath is held without either inhalation or exhalation. Both elbows are bent, so that the forehead touches the ground. Forehead, chest, both palms, both knees, both toes touch the ground. Only 8 limbs of the body, namely forehead, chest, both palms, both knees, and both toes touch the ground.

7. Bhujangasanam



Inhaling deeply, straightening the elbows and pushing the chest out, with the shoulders pushed back and head

thrown back, vision towards the sky, knees and toes kept touching the ground, spine arched in a concave curve, stretches the muscles of arms, shoulders, neck, back and trunk. Extensor muscles of the vertebral column, the sacrospinal extensor, and neck extensors are put into action.

8. Parvatasanam



Exhaling fully while lifting the torso, without shifting palms and toes, touching both heels to the ground, straightening arms and knees, pushing the head towards knees with the chin touching the chest, eyes centered on the nose tip, heels, waist and wrists forming a triangle; result in the, muscles of the body above the trunk getting stretched in the direction of the wrists, while the muscles from the trunk below get stretched in the direction of the heels.

This pose has been found to be very beneficial to gymnasts, athletes, and other sportsmen/sportswomen to add to their efficiency and skills.

After this 4,3,2,1 is repeated.

Other benefits

It is also worth noting that Sooryanamaskar may improve health by affecting many more biological phenomena involving the liver, stomach, kidneys, heart, brain, nervous system, secretion of hormones from glands situated at various centres in the human body, utilization of glucose, adenosine-di-phosphate and triphosphate, and triglycerides. Android Obesity as well as Gynecoid obesity can be controlled by performing Soorya Namaskar exercise. It is a combination of exercises and it can be performed from childhood to old age.

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