

Just breathe

 Dr Partap Chauhan

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Yoga's healing touch can improve not just our physical well-being but mental as well, says *Dr Partap Chauhan*

The importance of Pranayamas (breathing practices) has become quintessential even more in times of pandemic, especially since the Covid-19 virus impacts the lungs severely. The integrative medical fraternity has been stressing its importance since day one. Yoga originated in India and is considered to be a gift to the world. It is considered to be one of the most trusted ways to keep one's health in check. Its healing touch can not only improve our physical well-being but mental as well. It has the power of balancing the body, mind, and soul, all together, and helps in leading a healthy lifestyle.

With the pandemic affecting our physical as well as mental state, more and more people are taking up yoga to fight their isolation and keeping their lungs in the pink.

Here are some of the asanas that can strengthen your lungs, if practised rightly and regularly.

- Hasta uttanasana (raised arm yoga pose): Stand straight in samasthiti. With your hands in the air over your head and palms facing each other; bend back slowly while keeping your head between your hands. Maintain a straight line with your knees and keep your eyes open.
- Dhanurasana (bow pose): Start with lying on your stomach, bending your knees, and holding your ankles with your palms. Have a firm grip. Lift your legs and arms as high as you can. Face upwards and maintain the stance for a few moments.
- Ushtrasana (camel pose): Start with kneeling on your yoga mat with hands on your hips. Arch your back and move your palms over your feet at the same time, until your arms are straight. Maintain a neutral position for your neck. And for a few breaths, stay in this position. Exhale and slowly return to the starting position. As you straighten up, withdraw your hands and bring them back to your hips.
- Ardha Chandrasana (half-moon pose): Begin with Pada Hastasana and extend your left leg back, kneel and point your toes out. By looking up in the air stretch your arms over your head. Make sure your right knee is parallel to your ankle. Form an arch with your upper body by bending backward (which resembles half a moon). Hold the position for a few moments. Carry on with the opposite leg in the same manner.
- Chakrasana (wheel pose): Lie down on your back with your legs folded at the knees and your feet firmly planted on the floor. Bend your elbows and face the sky with your palms facing up. Place your palms on the floor on either side of your head and rotate your arms at the shoulders.
- Nadishodana pranayama: Practising Nadishodana helps in increasing the awareness of and sensitivity to the breath in the nostrils. It helps in removing the minor blockages from the nostrils and the flow of breath in both nostrils becomes more balanced. Breathing through the left nostril tends to activate the right brain hemisphere; breathing through the right nostril activates the left hemisphere. The long, slow, and balanced breathing has profound effects and calms and balances the energies.

Along with the regular practice of yoga, breathing exercises, and meditation, six to eight hours of sleep and eating balanced, home-cooked food is extremely important for leading a healthy life.

(The writer is the director of Jiva Ayurveda, author, public speaker, TV personality, and Ayurvedacharya.)