

# Effects of yoga on depression, anxiety and stress of women

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## Abstract

Yoga has often been perceived as a method of stress management tool that can assist in alleviating depression, anxiety and stress disorders. This study sought to evaluate the influence of yoga in relieving symptoms of depression, anxiety and stress in women who were referred to a yoga class.

**Keywords:** Yoga, Depression and Anxiety.

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## INTRODUCTION

Yoga's history has many places of obscurity and uncertainty due to its oral transmission of sacred texts and the secretive nature of its teachings. The early writings on yoga were transcribed on fragile palm leaves that were easily damaged, destroyed or lost. The development of yoga can be traced back to over 5,000 years ago, but some researchers think that yoga may be up to 10,000 years old. Since the 1970s, meditation and other stress-reduction techniques have been studied as possible treatments for depression and anxiety. One such practice, yoga, has received less attention in the medical literature, though it has become increasingly popular in recent years. By reducing perceived stress and anxiety, yoga appears to modulate stress response systems. This, in turn, decreases physiological arousal for example, reducing the heart rate, lowering blood pressure, and easing respiration. There is also evidence that yoga practices help increase heart rate variability, an indicator of the body's ability to respond to stress more flexibly.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study involved a convenience sample of women who were referred to a yoga class from June 2016 to August 2016. All new cases were evaluated on admission using a personal information questionnaire DASS 42. Participants were randomly assigned into an experimental and a control group. The experimental group (n = 34) participated daily yoga classes of 60 min. duration for 3 months. The control group (n = 31) was assigned to a waiting list and did not receive yoga. Both groups were evaluated again after the 3 month study period.

## RESULTS

**Table 1:** Age wise incidence of control and test cases

Age group (Yrs.)	Control (n=31)		Test (n=34)	
	n	%	n	%
30-40	18	58.06%	22	64.7%
41-50	11	35.4%	9	26.4%
51 & more	2	6.4%	3	8.8%

**Table 3:** Incidence of chief complaints in depression patients (n=280)

Complaints	No. Of cases (n=34)	Percentage
Work activity diminished	30	88.2%
Depressed mood	24	70.5%
Insomnia early	18	52.9%
Anxiety somatic	23	67.6%
Feeling of guilt	19	55.8%
Somatic symptoms	15	44.1%
Weight loss	14	41.1%

The average prevalence of depression in the experimental group pre and post Yoga intervention was 12.82±7.9 and

10.79±6.04 respectively, a statistically insignificant decrease ( $p=0.13$ ). However, when the experimental group was compared to the control group, women who participated in yoga classes showed a significant decrease in state anxiety ( $p = 0.03$ ) and trait anxiety ( $p<0.001$ ).

## DISCUSSION

The study was carried out during January 2015 to June 2016. Total 280 depressive patients were randomly selected to participate voluntarily in a questionnaire based data. (Depression Anxiety Stress Scale 42). DASS 42 is used for screening of stress, anxiety and depression and equal number of healthy normal individuals served as control. Women in 30-40 years age group (64.7%) were involved more in yoga. Diminished work activity (88.2%) was major complain followed by depressed mood (70.5%). Sharma *et al* (2006)<sup>1</sup>, in their study, both the groups were well matched for age, sex, socio-economic status and there was no significant difference in the baseline depression. After 8 weeks of intervention (Post test), there was significant reduction in the scores on Hamilton Rating Scales for depression and anxiety in both Group 1 (Antidepressants and Sahaj Yoga) ( $P<0.001$ ) and Group 2 (on Antidepressants only) ( $P<0.001$ ). Bhaduri Tappas *et al* (2013)<sup>2</sup>, depression is a disorder of fast paced life. The environment in which we are living is full of stress and tension. Health is not a stable state; it is a result of continuous adjustment of a person with its environment. So yoga is a good tool to maintain physical

and mental health .Surya namaskara is not only a physical exercise, it also gives a mental peace to a person. Surya namaskara stimulate the sympathetic nervous system .It is followed by shava asana which stimulate the parasympathetic nervous system and spacifics the sympathetic nervous system. In this way it helps in regulation of whole nervous system. Bhramari pranayama increases the concentration, relieve the anxiety. To conclude, participation in a 3 month yoga class can lead to significant reduction in perceived levels of anxiety in women who suffer from anxiety disorders. This study suggests that yoga can be considered as a complementary therapy or an alternative method for medical therapy in the treatment of anxiety disorders.

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