

From Asana to Aahar: The Combined Power of Yoga and Diet in Lifestyle Medicine

www.agrirootsmagazine.in

ISSN: 2583-9071

ARTICLE ID: 0234

Priya Pandey¹, R.N. Kewat², Sheetanu Singh¹, Garima Dixit³

¹Research Scholar, Department of Biochemistry, Acharya Narendra Deva University of Agriculture and Technology, Kumarganj, Ayodhya

²Professor, Acharya Narendra Deva University of Agriculture and Technology, Kumarganj, Ayodhya

³Research Scholar, Department of Food and Nutrition, Acharya Narendra Deva University of Agriculture and Technology, Kumarganj, Ayodhya

This chapter explores the intertwined relationship between yoga, diet, and holistic health, emphasizing their collective role in

preventing and managing modern lifestyle disorders.

Rooted in ancient Indian traditions, yoga is portrayed as a comprehensive discipline that harmonizes the mind and body through ethical practices (Yama and Niyama), physical postures (Asanas), breath

control (Pranayama), sensory withdrawal

(Pratyahara), concentration (Dharana), meditation (Dhyana), and

ultimate absorption (Samadhi). The chapter also delves into Ayurvedic dietary principles, highlighting the impact of wholesome, sattvic food on physical vitality and mental clarity. Scientific findings are integrated to support the efficacy of yoga and diet therapy in

addressing conditions such as hypertension, cardiovascular diseases, stress, anxiety, and depression. Additionally, it sheds light on the



biochemical influence of food on mood and cognition, reinforcing the age-old belief that both diet and yoga can profoundly shape human behavior and emotional well-being.

Yoga is an ancient discipline centered on performing physical postures (asanas) to cultivate balance between the mind and body. By mastering the mind, we return to our true nature; as expressed in “Tada Drashtuh Svarupe avasthanam.” (Naragatti,2020) India is renowned for its deep-rooted yoga traditions, and with ongoing scientific advancements, the therapeutic value of yoga is gaining wider acknowledgment.

Practicing yoga consistently contributes to better health, sharpens focus, improves strength and flexibility, and brings tranquility to both body and mind. Regular engagement in yoga can lead to transformative outcomes, including a more positive outlook on life, increased self-awareness, and a renewed enthusiasm for living with true joy. (Pandit *et. al.*,2023) Over the past several decades, extensive research into yoga therapy has highlighted its value as a supportive approach alongside conventional medical treatment, as well as its role in long-term rehabilitation. Emphasizing the adage "prevention is better than cure," yoga has emerged as a key practice for disease prevention. As a result, many health clubs now incorporate yoga into their regular programs, with some individuals attending these facilities specifically to participate in yoga sessions. (Naragatti,2020). There is a strong connection between yoga and diet. Proper nutrition is essential for maintaining health, managing disease symptoms, and potentially minimizing the need for medications. Ayurveda emphasizes the importance of a wholesome diet, which is believed to promote long life and robust health. According to Ayurvedic principles, a wholesome diet is one that is agreeable, nourishing, and supportive of both mental and physical well-being. In contrast, a diet that does not suit the mind and body is regarded as unwholesome (Pandit *et. al.*,2023)

The Rise of Lifestyle Disorders

The kind of diet a person follows has a direct impact on their behavior. As noted, "nutrients, whether consumed as part of food or in isolated form, can

change the brain's chemical makeup and thereby influence its functions." Numerous studies have explored how different food components affect brain health. For instance, diets rich in certain amino acids can help manage mood disorders like depression, while excessive intake of sugar, salt, or fat increases the risk of conditions such as hypertension, diabetes, and obesity. Consuming fresh fruits and vegetables, which are high in nutrients and antioxidants, may improve mood by influencing brain serotonin levels. Conversely, overeating foods high in saturated fats and sugars can impair memory. Additionally, rock salt, recommended during fasting, is rich in potassium and supports mental calmness. Overall, the chemical composition and purity of one's diet play a crucial role in mental well-being, a concept also reflected in ancient texts like the Chandogya Upanishad, which links pure food to mental clarity and liberation from emotional burdens.(Bansal,2024)

Overview of Yoga and Diet Therapy

Yoga practice is associated with increased fruit and vegetable intake, healthier dietary patterns, and more mindful approaches to eating. The use of meditation to boost mindfulness can aid in curbing binge-eating tendencies. Among those with diabetes, mindful eating has been shown to support improved nutrition, moderate weight loss, and better glycemic management (Raveendran *et.al.*,2018)

Types of Yoga and Their Benefits

There are many different forms of yogic practices, each offering unique benefits

Yama: The concept of Yama encompasses five ethical principles that guide moral conduct. These include

Ahimsa, which emphasizes non-violence and encourages individuals to avoid causing harm to others through actions, words, or even thoughts. Satya refers to truthfulness and the importance of honesty and sincerity in all interactions. Asteya means non-stealing, which involves refraining from taking anything that does not belong to oneself, extending to honesty in all aspects of behavior. Brahmacharya signifies sexual restraint or dedication to spiritual pursuits. Lastly, Aparigraha promotes an attitude of non-possessiveness, encouraging individuals to avoid greed and the desire to hoard material possessions.

Niyama: The Niyamas consist of five personal observances that foster self-discipline and personal growth. Shaucha emphasizes both internal and external purity, encouraging cleanliness of the body and mind. Santosha is the practice of contentment, promoting satisfaction and helping to overcome greed and envy. Tapah refers to austerity and self-discipline, encompassing both physical and mental endurance, and includes rigorous yogic practices that cultivate inner purity. Svadhyaya involves the study of sacred texts and self-reflection, inspiring deep contemplation on spiritual questions such as one's purpose and direction in life. Ishvarapranidhana is the practice of surrendering to a higher power or the Supreme Self.

Asana: Asana involves performing physical poses designed to promote balance and steadiness in both the body and the mind.

Pranayama: Pranayama involves using specific breathing exercises to control and steady the breath, slowing it down and making it more subtle, which

promotes a sense of equilibrium and unity between the mind and body.

Pratyahara: It means purposefully turning the senses inward, preventing them from being influenced by external stimuli or distractions.

Dharana: refers to sustaining attention on one chosen object, developing unwavering and unified concentration.

Dhyana: Dhyāna is the continuous and unbroken flow of attention toward one point of focus during meditation.

Samadhi: represents the complete absorption into pure awareness, where the differences between who sees, what is seen, and the act of seeing disappear (De *et.al.*,2017)

The Science of Aahar (Diet)

A wholesome diet, considered essential in Ayurveda, offers numerous benefits like increased energy, stronger immunity, better skin and vocal health, and sharper intellect. It is also believed to enhance the effectiveness of treatments and help balance the body's internal systems for overall well-being. (Pandit *et. al.*,2023)

Principles of Yogic Diet

A sattvic or yogic diet emphasizes foods believed in Ayurveda and Yoga to promote mental clarity and balance, such as fresh fruits, vegetables, grains, legumes, nuts, and dairy products like fresh milk and ghee. Foods are classified as sattvic (pure and beneficial), rajasic (stimulating), or tamasic (harmful or stale), with leftovers and foods involving harm to living beings considered tamasic. The purest sattvic foods are those obtained without causing harm, like

fruit that has fallen naturally from a tree (Parashar *et.al.*,2015)

How Yoga and Diet Work Together

A balanced diet supports both body and mind, making yoga more beneficial. Ayurveda explains how proper nutrition, combined with yoga, leads to greater energy and well-being. This combination is effective for improving health, boosting immunity, and increasing longevity, serving as essential guides for disease prevention and health preservation, even though their significance has diminished with the rise of modern science. .(Pandit *et. al.*,2023)

Hypertension and Cardiovascular Diseases

In India, conditions like high blood pressure, abnormal cholesterol, and elevated blood sugar are major contributors to cardiovascular disease (CVD). CVD risk factors are classified as modifiable (such as high BP, cholesterol, smoking, and obesity) and nonmodifiable (like age, gender, ethnicity, and family history). Managing CVD starts with assessing an individual's risk using tools like QRISK3, which considers a wide range of factors. While lifestyle changes such as regular exercise, healthy eating, and weight control have reduced CVD deaths, especially in older adults, more efforts are needed for those under 65. Regular yoga practice has been shown to lower risk factors like high blood pressure and cholesterol, making it a valuable tool for both preventing and managing CVD.(Kacker *et.al.*,2023)

Stress, Anxiety, and Depression: Scientific studies have shown that yoga has anti-stress benefits, helping to reduce stress levels dance therapy. According to the

Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, yoga is effective in lowering stress, which is important since stress is known to weaken the immune system. Numerous studies indicate that practicing yoga lowers anxiety and stress, enhances mood and physical health, and helps manage depression, including in caregivers of dementia patients. While yoga and similar mind-body therapies are effective compared to doing nothing, their benefits are less clear when measured against other established treatments.(Bhavani *et.al.*, 2014)

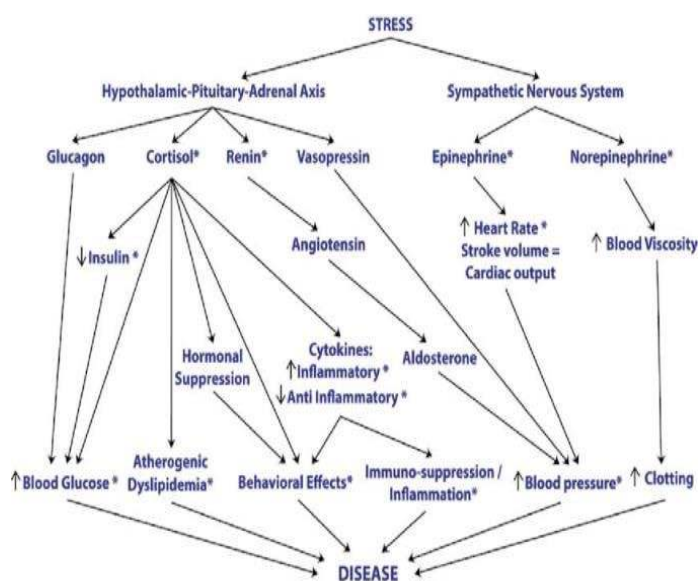


Figure: Impact Of Stress On Hypothalamic–Pituitary–Adrenal (Hpa) Axis And Sympathetic Nervous System

Conclusion

Yoga and diet are deeply connected systems that promote optimal health by fostering balance across the physical, mental, and spiritual dimensions of life. When practiced regularly and mindfully, yoga enhances bodily flexibility, mental focus, and emotional resilience. Meanwhile, an Ayurvedic and sattvic approach to diet nurtures inner purity, supports disease prevention, and complements

therapeutic interventions. Together, yoga and a conscious dietary lifestyle offer a sustainable, preventive approach to combating lifestyle-related disorders, including cardiovascular issues and psychological stress. As scientific research

continues to validate these ancient practices, integrating them into modern healthcare and daily life becomes increasingly essential for cultivating long-term wellness and vitality.

References

1. Bansal, A. (2024). "Concept of yogic diet and mental health: A literature review on scientific and scriptural aspects". *Journal of Positive School Psychology*, 6(6), 8364–8375.
2. Bhavanani, A. B., Ramanathan, M., & Madanmohan. (2014). Yoga and mind body therapies in health and disease
3. De, L. C., & Singh, D. R. (2017). "Yoga for healthy and quality life." *International Journal of Research in Applied, Natural and Social Sciences*, 5(9), 87–90.
4. Kacker, S., Rao, A., & Saboo, N. (2023). A study to evaluate the effect of a combined approach of yoga and diet in high-risk cardiovascular subjects. *International Journal of Yoga*, 16(2), 90–97.
5. Naragatti, S. (2020). "The study of yoga effects on health". *International Journal of Innovative Medicine and Health Science*, 12, 98–110.
6. Pandit, A., Dixit, M., Damle, P., Jadhav, S., Joshi, M., & Joshi, A. (2022). "Benefits of yoga and wholesome diet to maintain the health". *International Research Journal of Modernization in Engineering, Technology and Science*, 4(2), 637.
7. Parashar, A., & Parashar, A. B. (2015). Role and importance of yogic diet for health tourist. *International Journal of Science and Consciousness*, 1(2), 31–36.
8. Raveendran, A. V., Deshpandae, A., & Joshi, S. (2018). "Therapeutic role of yoga in type 2 diabetes". *Endocrinology and Metabolism*, 33(3), 307–317.