



‘Breathing is the physical part of thinking and thinking is the psychological part of breathing.’ – Ayurveda

Pranayama is a part of Yoga system that teaches you the art of extending your breath in many different ways. When practicing pranayama the breath should be skillfully inhaled, exhaled and retained. It teaches you to change the depth, rate and pattern of breathing.

Pranayama is a Sanskrit word which literally translates into “extension of the prana or breath”. ‘Prana’ means life-force and it is the life-force or vital energy that pervades the body. Prana is the link between mind and consciousness. The physical manifestation of “prana’ is breath and ”ayama” means to extent or draw out the breath.

When the Breath wanders, the mind is unsteady, but when the Breath is still, so is the mind still.” – Hatha Yoga Pradipika

Breathing is vital for our survival as it is the only way we can send oxygen inside our body and into our organs. We can live for months without consuming food and days without water, however we can only survive a few minutes without breathing. When you learn the breathing techniques it will positively affect your actions and thoughts. Every thought we have changes the rhythm of our breath. When we are happy breathing is rhythmic and when we are stressed breathing is irregular and interrupted. Mastering the art of breathing is a crucial step towards self-healing and survival.

Best time to practice:

Pranayama or breathing exercise can be a great way to start your day. Early morning is the best time to practice pranayama, especially outside where you can find fresh air. It is recommended to do breathing exercises on an empty stomach. There are some contraindications to these breathing exercises that I will discuss when I explain the pranayama’s.

Benefits of Pranayama:

- Pranayama techniques are beneficial in treating a range of stress related disorder.
- Pranayama improves the autonomic functions.
- It helps relieving the symptoms of asthma.
- It reduces the signs of oxidative stress in the body.
- Practicing pranayama everyday can assist in steady mind, strong will power and sound judgement.



- Regular

pranayama can extend life and enhance ones perception of life.

- Number of studies show that pranayama causes change in the cardio respiratory system including lowering of blood pressure
- Certain pranayama's are excellent for weight loss.

Getting ready for Pranayama:

To do pranayama sit facing east or north in a comfortable cross legged position on a yoga mat. Make sure your head, neck and chest are in a straight line and keep your spine stretched. Pranayama should not be performed within an hour of eating, bathing or sexual activity without at least an hour gap.

Who should not be doing Pranayama?

- Pranayama should be practiced with care and it is better to do advanced pranayama with a teacher's guidance.
- Pranayama is not recommended during menstruation, and pregnancy.
- Anyone with any form of heart condition, particularly if they have a recent history of heart attack. People with low blood pressure must practice pranayama under the guidance of a teacher or Ayurvedic Doctor.
- Avoid if you have fever, bronchitis, or pneumonia.
- Anyone going through radiation or chemo therapy.
- Not recommended for anyone going through psychological condition, sadness, grief, trauma, anger, anxiety, depression or suicidal feelings.

Love and light
Manali