

Monitoring and Maintaining Health in Covid-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

Any kind of discomfort or disease is a very disastrous and unpleasant thing in human life. Good health and fitness are prime and fundamental requirements for performing any physical or mental activity or enjoyment in life. Good health is mandatory for all routine work. A healthy life is related to overall human pleasure, happiness, and wellbeing. It contributes to wealth, prosperity, and progress since a healthy population is more productive and efficient. Being healthy is a complete state of physical or mental wellbeing, but it is social and spiritual stability and balance of mind. A healthy person can carry his duties and responsibilities promptly, efficiently, and effectively. If anybody has a healthy lifestyle with physical or mental fitness, he is a great wealthy person in the universe. Therefore, it is always believed that "health is wealth." But this journey of being healthy is not that simple. There are various challenges and obstacles to being healthy. It is challenging to be healthy and disease-free. Constant, regular, and disciplined monitoring of health is essential for achieving a disease-free life. Lack of time and exercise, sedentary lifestyle, stressful profession, unhealthy eating habits, and chair syndrome are main contributing problems for being healthy presently. The ongoing Covid 19 pandemic has increased it tremendously among almost all people. Many people lost their jobs. Daily waged laborers are mostly affected. This problem has a direct impact on their bread and butter. These all conditions are also associated with one or the other mental or physical issues. The daily activity is reduced and eventually leading to weight gain among the people. In addition, depression, anxiety, worries, and psychological stress are increased. People are first time experiencing this situation in their life. It is essential to be physically, mentally, and spiritually strong during this terrible phase. Because of this, the present review is planned to make the people cautious about their health and help them understand the importance of alternative medicine, including yoga, Pranayama, Meditation and some therapies for maintaining a healthy lifestyle, mental and physical fitness, and overall balance of mind.

Keywords: *Yoga, Pranayama, Chair syndrome, Sedentary lifestyle.*

Everyone needs a healthy lifestyle. Good health means having fitness and introducing a lifestyle that improves or maintains health. It is considered as metabolic & functional capability of the body and its ability to incorporate to mental, physical, environmental social, changes of its exposure. It is an essential requirement that assists a

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person to perform his daily duties or works in an accurate and précised manner with total efficiency and enthusiasm.

Health is not only concerned with only physical wellbeing but also related to social and mental soundness. A person's social health is nothing but accomplishing and achieving social tasks or responsibilities entrusted to him [01]. There are various advantages and benefits of good health. Good health is responsible for feeling better, saving money, suffering from no or minor diseases, and becoming physically and mentally strong. It is essential to check eating habits, hygiene, sleeping patterns, managing stress, addictions, physical activity, social behaviors, assessing health risks, and regular health checkups for getting healthy. Besides, a positive attitude is equally important for achieving good health. This is a continuous and constant process. [02]. It does not mean that healthy people are not suffering from diseases, but if a person has good health, they can fight the condition more quickly. As a result, he feels comfortable, achieves physical fitness, and enjoys life like a normal man. Though there are various benefits of health in our life, presently there are particular challenges for maintaining good health. Some of them are stressful professions, lack of exercise, sedentary lifestyle, disturbed sleep pattern, unhealthy eating habits, online tasks and targets, lack of time, junk foods, and addictions. These are well-known factors of an unhealthy lifestyle. The most common health problems associated are diabetes, hypertension, and cardiovascular diseases. Besides, a covid pandemic has also emerged as a massive challenge for staying happy and fit. The people are scared of this pandemic much than that of the earlier experience of the first wave. It's very risky to step out of the home. The state and central government have declared partial or complete lockdown in some states in India. All IT professionals, academicians, researchers, financial consultants, real estate engineers, architects, teachers are dependent on online works for their bread and butter. This pandemic hampered physical and mental health, resulting in socio-economic problems, poverty, unemployment, malnutrition, and disturbing social and family life [03]. It is already well known and documented the importance of exercises for physical and mental health. Keeping in mind the problems associated with this pandemic and the compulsion of mandatory online work, and to make other people aware of the importance of being mentally and physically fit, the current paper is a small ray of hope for being happy and fit. In this paper, the need and importance of *Yoga, Pranayama, Surya Namaskar, Meditation*, and specific therapies are explained. Some other ways to stay fit and happy are also tried enlightened here.

Complimentary Alternative Medicines (CAM)

A complimentary alternative system (CAM) is not a part of the primary health care system, but the popularity of this system is increased tremendously in the world. It is also believed that about 80-90 % of developed countries have used this system sometime in their lives [4]. This system of medicine consists of natural products and mind-body practices. Yoga (Yogic practice) is the primary practice under this and practiced for the past 3000 years. The preceding sections of this paper will try to focus light on such alternative medicines, practices, and therapies, which will prove beneficial for readers.

Yoga

Yoga is essential in bringing peace and harmony to a human being's emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual health. *Yoga* is vital for relieving, reducing, and alleviating all forms of pain and suffering [05]. Yogic practice typically consists of *Asanas* (physical postures) and *Pranayamas* (Breathing exercises) [06]. *Yoga* practice is helpful in the progress, development, and integration of mind, breath, and body to produce certain psychological

and physiological benefits [07]. *Yoga* is essential to balance physical and mental conditions. The aging process is delayed due to the regular work of *yoga* [08]. *Yoga* is also beneficial for self-management of diet and an exercise plan in diabetes and hypertension. According to Patanjali Yogapeeth, *yoga* contains 8 steps that are related to each other and vital. They are *Pranayama* (breathing exercise), *Yama* (self-regulations), *Pratyahara* (withdrawal of sense), *Niyama* (regularity, self-training), *Asana* (meditation posture), *Dharana* (concentration), *Dyana* (Meditation), *Samadhi* (deep absorption, bliss, state of complete attention). *Yoga* is now routinely performed for wellbeing and fitness in health clubs, community centers, schools, and colleges. Various IT companies, laughter clubs, and senior citizen assembly centers are also routinely practicing *yoga* [09]. Thorough research on *yoga* believes that *yoga* improves mental and physical health because it down-regulates the Hypothalamo-Pituitary-Adrenal (HPA) axis and Sympathetic Nervous System (SNS), which on repeated firing led to dysregulation and certain diseases [10, 11]. It also reduces muscle and joint stiffness. Clinically, *yoga* helps to reduce cortisol, blood glucose, renin release, blood pressure. *Yoga* relieves stress, boosts immunity, brings inner peace of mind, loses weight, provides flexibility, maintains a good and healthy relationship with family and community, increases energy, and improves intuitive ability [12-18]. In *yoga* there are following 12 main *Asanas*, *Matyasana* (fish pose), *Shirshasana* (headstand), *Sarvangasana* (shoulderstand), *Bhujangasana* (cobra pose), *Shalabhasana* (locust pose), *Mayurasana* (peacock pose), *Halasana* (plough pose), *Padhastasana* (standing forward bend), *Paschimottanasana* (sitting forward bend pose), *Ardha matsendrasana* (half spinal twist pose), *Dhanurasana* (bow pose), *Trikonasana* (triangle pose). These different *Asanas* have their benefits on the body and mind.

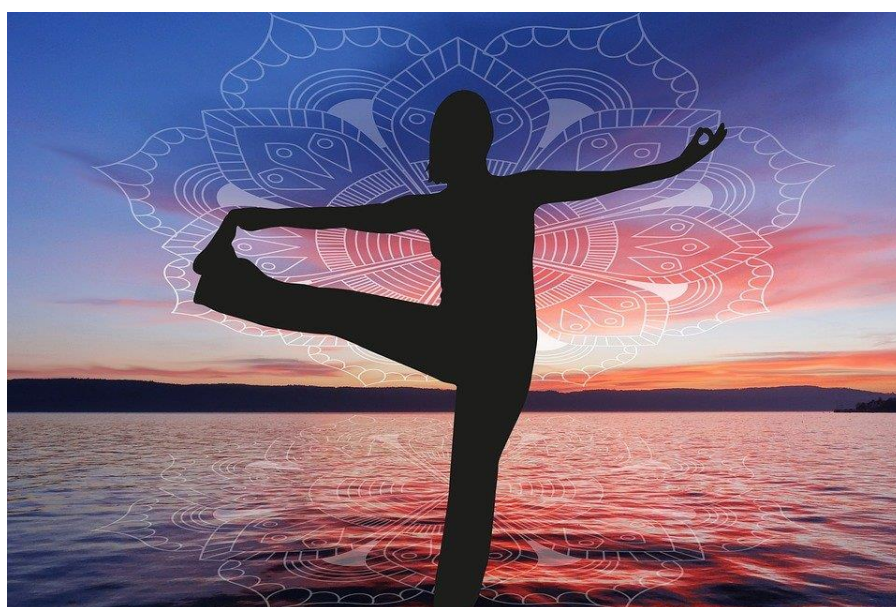


Fig. 1: Yoga for peace of Mind

Pranayama

The word '*Pranayama*' is derived from the Sanskrit language. '*Prana*' is the breath of life, and '*ayama*' means expansion/control/regulation. It is the breathing art with modification of breathing in simple language such as slow, fast, deep, and shallow breathing. Both or either nostril is involved in it with breath-holding technique in regular seating position. *Bhastrika*, *Kapalbhati* and *Anuloma Viloma* are different pattern of this *Pranayama*. *Pranayama* usually involved four different breathing practices such as *Pūraka* (inhalation), *Antah kumbhaka*

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(internal breath retention), *Recaka* (exhalation), and *Bahih kumbhaka* (external breath retention). [19-20]. It is defined as the holistic process of *yoga. Pranayama* has important benefits such as stress relief, improvement of cardiovascular and respiratory functions, and cognitive function [21-22]. It is also documented that there are significant beneficial results are observed in Asthma patients following regular *Pranayama*. In these patients, *Pranayama* helps by reducing muscle tone in respiration and correcting abnormal breathing patterns. Fatigue, anxiety, worries, tensions are also reduced, especially in cancer, diabetic and cardiovascular patients. The blood pressure also reduced with *Pranayama*. Practice in the hypertensive patients [23]. Thus, *Pranayama* proved to have both physiological and psychological benefits.



Fig. 2: Pranayama

Meditation

To be honest, meditation is difficult to describe since it encompasses a wide variety of activities from various traditions. Meditation is the practice of focusing or mindfulness on a particular thought to have awareness and attention to gain a complete calm and clear mental state. Meditation is also called *Dhyana*, which includes contemplation. Meditation is designed to promote relaxation, rejuvenation, and the mind's stability and build internal energy [24]. Meditation has sound effects not only on the spiritual but on business and health. Meditation is practiced in numerous religious traditions. Meditation reduces frustration, stress, anxiety, depression pain and increases peace, perception, wellbeing, and self-concept. It improves concentration by becoming thoughtless. It helps to reduce blood pressure. It brings freshness to mind [25]. It also reduces cardiac problems due to the reduction of cholesterol. It relieves insomnia, ulcers, headaches, muscle and joint issues, or stiffness improves serotonin production, elevating mood and behavior. It improves breathing due to the increased flow of air to the lungs and immune response. It decreases the aging process and enhances the feeling of youthfulness. It boosts happiness, creativity, perfection, intuition, and peacefulness. It also improves confidence, attention, grasp, wisdom, physical and mental strength, and overall balance for students. It brings harmony to life. Meditation is commonly done sitting with closed eyes, and sometimes prayers or rituals are

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simultaneously performed during Meditation. It is also considered a practice of yoga in which there is constant monitoring and observation of the mind [26]. There are different types of Meditation such as *yoga meditation*, *vipassana meditation*, *transcendental Meditation*, *relaxation meditation*, *mindfulness meditation*, *walking meditation*, *simple Meditation*, *vibrating meditation*, *mantra meditation*, and many more [27].



Fig. 3. Meditation

Physical activities and exercises

Physical activity or exercise includes joints, limbs, trunk, head, and waist produced by skeletal muscle with the expenditure of energy [28]. Physical activity is not exercised. Exercise is a planned, repetitive, purposeful, intentional, disciplined, and structured way of physical activity [29]. Both are keeping our body and mind healthy and disease-free. Physical activity and exercise can improve self-confidence, build strength and endurance, reduce anxiety and stress, sharpen memory, increase the brain's power, and increase our bones and muscles strong. They improve flexibility. They also release hormones such as endorphins which create euphoria and happiness, so life becomes enjoyable. They reduce boredom. They also help in preventing obesity, reducing heart disease, blood sugar fluctuations, and cancer. There are various studies already conducted to highlight the benefits of exercise [30-31]. Exercise reduces diabetes, hypertension, bone stiffness, muscle problems, obesity, depression, tension, weakness, skeletal issues, mental disorders, and many more. Exercise is compulsory for all, irrespective of gender, age, weight, or body pattern. It's equally essential for everybody. Exercise requires dedication and regularity. Exercise helps in burning calories and proper nutrition, and it helps to reduce obesity and related complications. It also forms new friendships through new communities. At any age, being physically fit is advantageous for overall health.

Exercises may be different for different body parts, e.g., breathing exercises, joint exercises, abdominal exercises, cardiac exercises, aerobic exercises, joint exercises, back exercises. These all are prescribed by a physiotherapist for certain patients. Collaborative activities are swimming, cycling, walking, running, skipping rope, jogging, raking, digging, gardening, dancing, jumping, etc. Many girls and boys join dancing classes for exercises or as hobbies.

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Some other heavy forms of exercise are lifting weights, calisthenics, pushups, stretching, athletics, sit-ups, pull-ups. A disciplined way of training, with *yoga*, Meditation, and *Pranayama*, will bring peace and harmony to overall health. Depending on age or disease state, mild, moderate exercise can be performed with consultation of the therapist. Routine physical work at home, farm, or factories is also considered satisfactory for being healthy. Climbing a staircase without the use of elevators is frequently suggested by the cardiologist for assuring cardiac health. Minimum 1-hour exercise in any form is mandatory five days a week to keep healthy [32].

Surya Namaskar

Surya namaskar is obeisance or salutation (*Namaskar*) to the Sun (*Surya*). Ideally, *Surya Namaskar* should be performed in front of the rising sun in the morning. One should wake up early in the morning to do so. It is yogic practice, having twelve postures to be performed, one following the other in fixed, continuous cyclic order for the salutation of the sun. This practice can be done in a three-speed manner slow, medium, and fast as per the age. This is an essential and commonly observed practice in health clubs, terraces, gymnasiums, and gardens early in the morning. *Surya namaskar* helps lose weight and obesity, increases body flexibility, improves circulation and respiration, helps in muscle toning, increases cardiovascular health, stimulates hormones, aids in digestion, relieves anxiety and stress, and increases energy. It helps in maintaining good health [33].

Nutrition and balanced diet

Apart from all the above practices, the need for a balanced diet cannot be skipped. Nutritious food includes nutrients, vitamins, minerals, and electrolytes that keep our body working efficiently. This is present in grains, fruits, milk, vegetables, and meat. Fitness can be achieved by maintaining a good and nutritious diet having all essential requirements. There should be proper intake and expenditure of calories, maintaining a suitable balance. On average, 2000 calories are required for a person to have their body weight. Generally, a person's calories may depend on their age, gender, and physical activity. A balanced diet is helping to feel happy, energetic, boosting mood, improving health, and preventing various disorders of body and mind. not only quality but the number of meals consumed a day also matters. Nutritionists and dieticians insist on taking 50-60% only of real hunger [34]. Unhealthy, salty, spicy, oily, sugary, along with junk food and snacks, must be avoided to keep healthy. Dixit diet plan is also found beneficial for reducing obesity, diabetes, and hypertension. The frequency of food consumption is limited to a maximum of twice a day in that diet plan [35].

Music therapy

Music therapy found most effective in all age group, especially who are battling with illnesses. Music in any form is used to reduce pain and suffering, facilitate relaxation, and provide peacefulness. Music also helps to reduce anger, blood pressure, anxiety, worries and improves respiration, cardiac function, muscle tension. It elevates mood and happiness, and positivity. It improves cognitive, psychomotor, emotional function and increases creativity and concentration. Music therapy is very effective for psychiatric patients. Many restaurants, hotels, clubs, dining places, and ceremonies are equipped with musical instruments. In addition to music, singing also proved beneficial for respiratory problems and good health. It is similar to *Pranayama*, where the air is inhaled and exhaled with sound. The less intensity of music (instrumental or songs) is offering a pleasing experience. The old aged people are fond of old songs [36].



Fig. 4. Music therapy

Steam therapy

Steam therapy is mainly used to soothe and open the nasal passages to relieve cold and sinus infection symptoms. In steam therapy, water vapors are inhaled. It loosens the mucus in the respiratory route. The infection is not cured due to steaming but feeling well. Steaming is having beneficial effects on respiratory tract diseases. It controls cough, headache, congestion, drains mucus, and can prevent infection. It also promotes circulation by dilating blood vessels. It opens the pores of the skin and releases acne-causing bacteria. Steaming was also found effective in small children [37]. It also hydrates and moisturizes the skin. A recent study indicated that steaming could inactivate SARS COV-2 virions [38].



Fig. 5. Steam therapy

Massage therapy

Massage is the oldest healing technique. Commonly massage is done for therapeutic purposes. Massage therapy involves the practice of kneading/pressing/rubbing a part of the body to improve its function. This is done with pressure to the affected areas such as muscle, joint, tendon, or ligament [39]. Commonly this therapy is involved in osteology practice. The application of pressure, rubbing, pressing vary depending on the requirement of the patient. Massage therapy is vital in managing stress, anxiety, soft tissue injuries, insomnia, and hypertension. Massage therapy reduces muscle tension, stimulates the lymphatic system, increases joint mobility and flexibility, reduces stress hormones, increases neurological

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excitability, improves blood circulation, improves skin tone, and increases alertness and performance [40]. Nowadays, there are various electrical and mechanical devices for massaging. They cause vibrations, and therefore they can be rolled over any particular part of the body to massage [41-42].

Prayers and pooja

Many people believe and feel cheerful and gratified after praying to their god. It includes invocation. Praying is beginning or establishing the connectivity and relationship to god through the mind. Prayer and pooja are involved in worshipping god. Most people are having idols of their deity. Pooja and worship involve different rituals as per the tradition and culture of the community. Although other religion has various forms of prayers, the aim of all is to connect the divinity. Prayer and *pooja* help improve self-control, enhance relationship, reduce stress and blood pressure, combat depression, relieve pain, and promote longer life [43].

CONCLUSION

Yoga, Pranayama, Meditation all help bring overall physical, mental and spiritual calmness and balance of mind. Exercise is helpful to be physically fit and reduce the risk of common health issues such as hypertension, diabetes, and cardiovascular problems. A healthy, nutritious diet keeps the body free from diseases, supplemented with regular physical activity. The exercise also helps to maintain homeostasis. Physical activities, *Surya namaskar*, and exercise provide immediate and long-term health benefits. Specific others therapies discussed in the paper, such as music therapy, steaming, massaging, helps to impart excellent effects on the quality of life. These techniques, practices, or therapies are cheaper and do not require any investment/instrument, or equipment. They are easy to perform at home. Various videos, books, literature, articles are available, commonly depicting their importance and procedure. We should not ignore them. They bring fitness and balance of mind and add harmony, peace, and satisfaction in life. Therefore, they help make this precious life more beautiful, joyous, happy, healthy, and pleasant!

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Conflict of Interest

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