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**Yoga and Ayurveda**

Yoga and Ayurveda are two closely related spiritual or sacred sciences rooted in the Vedic tradition of India. Ayurveda is the Vedic science of healing for both body and mind. Yoga is the Vedic science of Self-realization that depends upon a well-functioning body and mind.

According to the “Yoga Sutras of Patañjali”, yoga is an eight-limbed path that forms the structural framework for yoga practice. Upon practicing all eight limbs of the path, it becomes self-evident that no one element is elevated over another in a hierarchical order. In brief the eight limbs, or steps to yoga, are as follows:

1. **Yama :** Universal morality
2. **Niyama :** Personal observances
3. **Asanas :** Body postures
4. **Pranayama :** Breathing exercises, and control of prana
5. **Pratyahara :** Control of the senses
6. **Dharana :** Concentration and cultivating inner perceptual awareness
7. **Dhyana :** Devotion, Meditation on the Divine
8. **Samadhi :** Union with the Divine

**We will be mostly focusing on two out of the eight limbs** today: Pranayama (breath exercises and Asanas (body postures) according to your Dosha.

Ayurveda recommends asanas as its most important lifestyle recommendation for exercise. Asana is the main yogic tool for balancing the physical body.

There are two main factors to consider in the practice of asana. The first is the manner and attitude with which the asanas are performed. The second is the particular asanas chosen. The first factor is the most significant. It is more important how we perform an asana than which particular asanas we do.

Asana is useful for all constitutions, though in different ways, and done right works to balance all the doshas.

The practice you want is usually not the practice you need.

Warm-up for all Doshas:

* Lay on back, feet hip distance apart, bend knees
* Focus on breath, check in with yourself
* Roll up to Sukhasana
* Side stretches
* Table-cat-cow
* Lunge-hamstring
* Downward facing dog

**Vata (Space and Air)**

**Pranayama: Ujjayi or Alternate nostril breathing (to balance erratic energy).**

1. Close the right nostril with your right thumb and inhale through the left nostril. Do this to the count of four seconds.
2. Immediately close the left nostril with your right ring finger and little finger, at the same time remove your thumb from the right nostril, and exhale through this nostril. Do this to the count of eight seconds. This completes a half round.
3. Inhale through the right nostril to the count of four seconds. Close the right nostril with your right thumb and exhale through the left nostril to the count of eight seconds. This completes one full round.

Start by doing three rounds, adding one per week until you are doing seven rounds.

Alternate nostril breathing should not be practiced if you have a cold or if your nasal passages are blocked in any way. Forced breathing through the nose may lead to complications. In pranayama, it is important to follow this rule: under no circumstances should anything be forced. If you use the nostrils for breath control, they must be unobstructed. If they are not, you must practice throat breathing.

Alternate nostril breathing can also be done standing, closing off right nostril with tips of “peace” fingers, slowly lifting left arm up, palm of hand facing up. Close off left nostril with left hand moving right arm down slowly palm facing down. Lift up right arm, close off right nostril, moving left arm down.

Both counts for inhales and exhales are seven for balancing cooling with warming.

**Yoga Postures for Vata Constitution:**

**Calm, slow, steady, grounding, strengthening and consistent**

Vatas need to perform asanas in a way that reduces vata, starting with the right mental attitude. Never rush or hurry into asana practice.

Put your mind in a calm space and place your emotions in a condition of rest. Slow down and deepen your breath before beginning any postures.

Warm up your body gradually, improving your circulation and loosening your joints.

Exercise to the point of a mild sweat only with plenty of fluids.

A gentle attitude and gradually flowing movements are best.

Asanas:

* Sitting poses like Lotus Pose (Siddhasana), Diamond Pose (Vajrasana), Lion Pose, Virasana
* Sun Salutation done slowly and consciously
* Standing poses like Tree Pose (Vrksasana), Triangle (Trikonasana), Warrior Poses (Virabhadrasana), Gate Pose (Parighasana) and all standing forward bends
* Inverted poses like Headstand, Viparitakarani ( a relaxing inversion)
* Cobras and Locusts (simple back bending), done consciously and carefully
* Forward bends of all types, especially Janu Sirsasana (head-knee forward bend) and Paschimottanasana (full forward bend)
* Fetal position, Kurmasana (Tortoise), Parivrtta Janu Sirsasana (turning head-knee), Navasana (Boat Pose)
* Spinal twists, especially lying twists, Bharadvajasana II (Sage Twist), Pasasana (Noose twist).
* Corpse pose: vatas need to do a long and comfortable relaxation of at least 20 minutes

**Example Sequence for Vata:**

* Put mind in a calm place and do warm-ups, connect to your body, exhales longer then inhales
* Sun Salutations done slowly, with bend knees and/or blocks for tight hamstrings during forward fold (Uttanasana),
* Tree Pose close to wall for balance (open hips), meditate, focus on one point
* Triangle pose along wall with blogs, focus on hip opening, alignment, grounding, calming nourishing Ujjayi breath, hold
* Switch to other side
* Warrior II, focus on grounding, hold
* Switch to other side
* Head-to-knee forward fold (Janu Sirsasana) for calming
* Spinal twist for kidneys
* Loooooong Savasana with guided meditation first

**Pitta (Fire)**

**Pranayama: Cooling Breath (shitali) for cooling.**

**1.** Roll out your tongue. Inhale slowly on a count of four. Or, if the genetics prevent you from rolling your tongue. No problem.
Bite your teeth together and keep the mouth open to make it possible for the air to pass.
Roll the tip of your tongue as far back as possible. Inhale slowly and count to four.

2. Close your lips.
Hold the breath as long as possible
3. Keep the mouth closed.
Exhale slowly through your nostrils on a count to six.
4. Repeat the cycle again.
Not more than ten rounds or 10 minutes for a beginner.

**Watch out!** If you have a low blood pressure. Do not practice the cooling breath in a cold weather.
Not for people with a cold, cough, asthma, lung disorder, arthritis or chronic constipation problems

**Yoga Postures for Pitta Constitution:**

**Cooling, relaxing, surrendering, forgiving, gentle, diffusive**

Pittas should perform asanas in a way that is cooling, nurturing, expansive and relaxing. This requires relaxing breaths and quiet sitting between strong asanas to release any stress that is developing.

Asanas:

* Sitting postures in general, except Lion Pose
* Moon salutation (Chandra Namaskar)
* Standing Poses, especially hips open poses like the Tree Pose, Triangle Pose (Trikonasana), and Ardha Chandrasana (Half Moon Pose)
* Legs open standing forward bends like Prasarita Padottanasana I (extended spread legs).
* Shoulder stand, Viparitikarani, Boat Pose, Fish Pose, Cobra Pose, Bow Pose, Fetal Pose
* All sitting forward bends, especially Seated wide legged forward fold (Upavistha Konasana), and Kurmasana (tortoise), Paschimottanasana. pigeon
* Twists like Ardha Matsyendrasana II and Marichyasana
* Laying twists
* Corpse Pose

**Example Sequence for Pitta:**

* chanting
* Warm-ups medium speed, breathing in relaxing energy with cool air surrendering to the poses
* Sun Salutations in medium speed
* Childs pose
* Triangle pose into Half-Moon Pose along the wall to be able to relax, cool, hold poses into surrender
* Childs pose
* Twisted lunge or revolved triangle
* Cow-face (focus on opening hips) use breath to surrender
* Plow, shoulder stand
* Fish pose
* Forward seated wide legged fold, surrender with breath
* Twists like Ardha Matsyendrasana II and Marichyasana
* Savasana with compassion meditation

**Kapha (Water and Earth)**

**Pranayama: Ujjayi or Kalabhati Bhati (Breath of Fire) to jump start slow metabolism.**

1. Inhale through the nose and exhaling through the nose with a short exhale to make a short snorting sound. As you do that, draw the belly button in powerfully. Practice 3 to 5 rounds. Continue with the full kalabhati breath. Inhale through the nose and exhale sharply through the nose as you draw the center of the belly inwards, in a “pumping” action. Continue to pump the breath and exhale through the nose making the snorting sound until you need to inhale once more. Only do 7 to 10 rounds.
2. Continue with the full kalabhati breath. Inhale through the nose and exhale sharply through the nose as you draw the center of the belly inwards, in a “pumping” action. Continue to pump the breath and exhale through the nose making the snorting sound until you need to inhale once more. Only do 7 to 10 rounds.
3. Rest by taking several recovery breaths of normal inhalations and exhalations. Kalabhati is designed to create this internal agni fire for digestion. At the same time, it also [exercises](http://www.ehow.com/sports/) the abdominal muscles, rectus abdominus.

**Yoga Postures for Kapha Constitution:**

**Stimulating, moving, warming, lightening, energizing, releasing**

Kaphas benefit by exercise that causes them to sweat, even profusely and pushes them beyond what they think is the limit of their exertion. Generally, kaphas should be made to do stronger exercise than they like and must be taught to challenge themselves.

Asanas:

* Lion Pose or sitting poses for pranayama
* Sun salutation, strong vinyasas or ‘jumping’
* Warrior Poses (Virabhadrasana), extended hand toe (Utthita Hasta Padangusthasana), (extended foot above ( Urdhva Prasarita Ekapadasana), Half Moon ( Ardha Chandrasana)
* Downward facing Dog (Adho Mukha Svanasana), Upward facing dog (Urdhva Mukha Svanasana
* Full inverted balancing poses like handstand (Adho Mukha Vrksasana), Peacock Feather Pose (Pinca Mayurasana)
* Headstand and shoulder stand with variations
* Plow Pose, all backbends like Upward Bow Pose, Camel Pose (Ustrasana), and Locust Pose, Alligator Twist (Jathara Parivartanasana), or Marichyasana followed by a short Savasana.

**Example Sequence for Kapha:**

* Warm-ups
* San Salutations fast speed creating heat with jumps, hold down dog longer
* triangle
* warrior II
* Side angle
* Reverse warrior
* Fast vinyasa flow warrior II-side angle-reverse warrior
* Dancers pose
* Eagle pose (shoulder opener)
* Camel pose
* Bridge into wheel focusing on shoulder opening
* Floor twist
* Short Savasana

Reference Book: “Yoga & Ayurveda”, *Self-Healing and Self-Realization* by Dr. David Frawley.