



ISSN: 2456-0057  
IJPNPE 2019; 4(1): 2202-2204  
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www.journalofsports.com  
Received: 06-11-2018  
Accepted: 08-12-2018

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## Geriatric healthcare through yoga

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### Abstract

Geriatrics health is a speciality that focuses on healthcare of elderly people or the declining phase people after midlife. It aims to promote health by preventing and treating diseases and disabilities in older adults. India is in a phase of demographic transition. There has been a sharp increase in the number of elderly persons between 1991 to 2001 and it has been projected that by the year 2050, the number of elderly people would rise to about 324 million.

Yoga is a spiritual science for the integrated and holistic development of physical, mental and spiritual aspects of our being. Yoga is extremely beneficial for the elderly people. Yoga enhance strength, flexibility and preventing senescence and age-related diseases. In ancient books of Yoga has described enough formulation or Yogic Kriyas that help continue with good health even in old age. It is essential Bro study how Yama, Niyama impacts social, emotional and spiritual health in the aged, how Asana, Pranayama emboldens the body and mind, how Kriyas, Mudras, Bandhas build resilience, strengthen all systems and delay ageing.

This paper emphasizes on Geriatric health care through Yoga. Yoga ensures that old age can be e need not only bearable but also pleasurable.

**Keywords:** Geriatric healthcare, yoga, body and mind, medicine, Yoga therapy aims to promote health

### Introduction

Geriatrics (Jara chikitsa) is the branch of medicine dealing exclusively with the problems of aging and the diseases of elderly. Acharya Charak states that vriddhavastha begins at 60 years. Acharya Sushruta and Vagbhata mention 70 years and above. However, signs of premature ageing and onset of geriatric diseases is evident today much before these ages. Jara is a Swabhava Bala Pravrutta Vikara. With Swasthavritta Palana it is attained at proper age i.e. kalaja Jara. But due to a Parirakshana Kruta i.e. improper care and regimen, premature ageing or Akalaja Jara sets in. Yoga is an ancient discipline designed to bring balance and health to the physical, mental, emotional, and Spiritual dimensions of the individual. Yoga is often depicted metaphorically as a tree and comprises eight aspects, or "limbs:" Yama (universal ethics), niyama (individual ethics), asana (physical postures), pranayama (breath control), pratyahara (control of the senses), dharana (concentration), Dyana (meditation), and Samadhi (bliss). Yoga as a complementary therapy is thought to be more therapeutic than traditional exercise because it involves active engagement between mind and body. Yoga therapy aims to promote health and self-awareness for the purpose of enlightenment. Yoga has various influences on health, its greatest particularity is that it is accessible for individuals from all age groups and of different physical levels. Yoga is particularly beneficial to the old person because it enhances strength and flexibility and prevents pain and injuries. Yoga is a gentle form of exercise that has positive impact on physical, mental and emotional wellbeing in older adults. Yoga is a commonly practiced, mind-body approach which has major components like meditation, breathing, and activity or postures. Increased muscular strength, flexibility, range of motion, energy, relaxation, and sense of well-being, decreased pain, improved sleep quality, reduction of stress, and control over physiological parameters are the presumed benefits of yoga therapy. Yoga can address known fall risk factors (poor balance, impaired mobility, reduced strength and flexibility) and improved balance in older adults although yoga is historical a spiritual discipline, it has been used clinically for therapeutic intervention. Since past 3 decades, the number of publications for clinical applications of yoga has greatly increased. In literature there are many articles of use of yoga in variety of condition such as

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multiple sclerosis, rheumatoid arthritis, breast cancer, low back pain, migraine, epilepsy. There are many reviews on the effects of hath yoga in rehabilitation after myocardial infarction, menopausal symptoms, diabetes, and hypertension. Yogasanas ranges from simple to complex body postures, along with controlled breathing. These asanas stretches major muscle groups and uses isometric contraction and relaxation of various group of muscles to assume static posture. Its practice has been associated with increased muscle strength, endurance, flexibility, and range of motion and cardiopulmonary endurance. It mainly works on increasing body awareness and proprioception, which will lead to improvement of balance in older adults.

### Benefits of geriatric yoga

Yoga is a study of life, study of your body, breath, mind, intellect, memory, and ego. Study of your inner faculties. The physical benefits help you to feel stronger, more flexible and generally healthier. But there is also a huge amount of benefit for your mental health. Yoga allows you to think more clearly and develop a positive outlook. Yoga incorporates mindfulness and breathing which improve your mind-body connection and this brings a sense of presence and self-satisfaction.

- **Improved strength and confidence:** Yoga builds muscle tone and helps to strengthen the body. As you hold a pose the muscle fibres are activated and working hard to keep you strong and steady.
- **Better posture and balance:** Improved posture and balance is a well-documented benefit of yoga and anyone can achieve this with a regular practice. This will also help you feel more grounded and will help to reduce the likelihood of having a fall.
- **Increased mobility:** One of the most powerful benefits of yoga is improved range of motion and flexibility. Yoga keeps you supple and reduces joint-pain and general aches and pains associated with sitting for long periods of time.
- **Encourages a positive outlook:** With age, daily physical activity generally decreases for both men and women as part of the natural ageing process. Yoga boosts your mood and energy levels by helping you to become more active, even though yoga is a gentle, low impact form of exercise. Yoga enhances your overall well-being and allows energy to flow freely through your body, giving you a sense of positivity and a better quality of life.
- **Reduced blood pressure and a better sleep:** One of the main benefits of yoga is the amazing calmness you feel both during and after it. Yoga is a time of self-indulgence, when you can focus solely on your body, mind and breath. During a class you will find stillness and become mindful through the gentle movements. At the end of most yoga sessions there is usually meditation or relaxation time for embracing the present moment, without judgment or distractions. This relaxation state lowers blood pressure, so it's the perfect way to guide you into a restful sleep and support you in achieving a better balance of deep sleep and a healthy sleep pattern.
- **Improved respiratory function:** Yoga improves respiratory function in older adults. Through yoga you can learn how to use the full breath. Using the whole breath by breathing deeply and slowly into the belly allows you to make better use of your lung capacity. This means more oxygen can be sent around the body as well

as creating a calm, relaxed feeling through the body and mind.

- **Enhanced cognitive function:** When practicing yoga, we focus only on what we're doing. We're in the moment. Concentrating on our breath or the positioning of your body brings a sense of mental clarity. The mind becomes clear and you have improved mental clarity.
- **Improved circulation:** The gentle, flowing movements of the breath and body used in yoga increases blood flow.
- **Better digestion:** Bodily functions and the effectiveness of our organs can slow down with age as organs become weaker. Yoga has detoxifying qualities, especially when compressing the abdominal organs in twisting poses. This helps to boost the digestive system and eliminate toxins from your body, leaving you feeling refreshed.
- **Improved mindfulness:** Yoga is not just for the body, it's also for the mind. Good mental health is of great importance later in life. The CDC report that 20% of people aged over 55 suffer with some form of mental health issue, such as depression, anxiety and disorders affecting memory or mood. Keeping your mind focused and calm through breathing and meditation - which are both non-physical activities - can enhance your quality of life. Put simply, mindfulness will keep you feeling positive and healthy for longer.

### Yoga asanas for geriatric health

- **Trikonasana:** Trikonasana reduces blood pressure, a common issue faced by the elderly. It decreases fat from the waist and thighs and keeps them light and fit. The pose gives stability and balance and prevents fidgeting and imbalance. It strengthens and stretches the arms and legs, which helps the elderly do their chores better.
- **Kati Chakrasana:** Kati Chakrasana helps to relieve stiffness of the back, shoulder and neck muscles. It is a good pose for senior citizens to maintain the flexibility of their body during old age. It strengthens the back, neck and shoulders. Kati Chakrasana expands the chest and improves lung capacity.
- **Baddha Konasana:** Baddha konasana stimulates the bladder and kidneys, Relieves fatigue and anxiety, improves the posture and helps relieve sciatica, Smoothens out the process of menopause.
- **Shishuasana:** This asana is a great reliever of back pain. It regulates the blood circulation too, by calming the nervous system. It relaxes the back, helping to back aches. It is a very common type of yoga asana practiced by elderly people.
- **Bhujangasana:** Bhujangasana Loosens the stiffened lower back, Stretches their muscles in the chest, abdominals, and shoulders to keep them flexible, Increases body flexibility And most important strengthens the spine.
- **Shalabhasana:** Shalabhasana Tones the neck and back muscles, increasing flexibility. It Tones the abdominal organs, improving digestion.
- **Pawanmuktasana:** It strengthens the abdominal muscles and massages the intestines and internal organs of the digestive system, therefore releasing trapped gases and improving digestion. It strengthens the back muscles and tones the muscles of the arms and the legs.

### Yoga Nidra

Yoga Nidra is a systematic method of inducing complete

physical, mental and emotional relaxation. During the practice of Yoga Nidra, one appears to be asleep; but the consciousness is functioning at a deeper level of awareness. In this threshold state between sleep and wake-fullness, contact with the subconscious and unconscious dimensions occurs spontaneously. In Yoga Nidra, the state of relaxation is reached by turning inwards, away from outer experiences. If the consciousness can be separated from external awareness and from sleep, it becomes very powerful and can be applied in many ways; for example: to develop the memory, increase knowledge and creativity or transform one's nature.

Yogic relaxation helps elderly people overcome many of the specific psychological difficulties related to old age. Elderly people may confront a variety of difficulties including loss of confidence, lowered self-esteem, depression, unmet dependency needs, loneliness, boredom and fear of the future. Yoga Nidra is especially helpful for those elderly persons who habitually transform their psychological difficulties into physical symptoms and complaints associated with their advancing age. It is preferable for beginners to practice Yoga Nidra under the guidance of an experienced Yoga teacher or instructor. Yoga Nidra is practiced in Shavasana. As pain and stiffness in the body are great obstacles to the practice of Yoga Nidra; it should be preferably performed after yoga asanas.

### Conclusion

Yoga is ideal for exercise for the elderly. It is easily adaptable to their needs and, most importantly, keeps injury at bay. Yoga can help slow down the effects of the ageing process by maintaining muscle softness and flexibility, keeping the mind alert and awake, encouraging relaxation and strengthening muscles and joints. Its multi-pronged approach can encourage the body, mind and spirit to remain healthy and strong while reducing the effects of many age-related issues. Old age is not a matter of years but a condition of mind and Yoga brings a healthy state of mind. Yoga may not only add a few years to life but also may add life to the years. Therefore, practice of Yoga should become an integral part of old age.

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