PRANAYAMA (YOGIC BREATHING)

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PRANAYAMA MANTRA:
PRANASY EDAM VASE SARVAM,
TRIDIVE YAT PRATISTITHAM.
MAATEVA PUTRAN RAKSJASVA,
SREESCHA PRAGNAMCHA VIDEHINA ITI

Whatever exists in three worlds,
Is all under the control of Prana.
Prana, protect us as a mother protects her sons,
Give us affluence and intelligence.

What is Pranayama?
Prana governs the whole universe. PRANA – means force/vital energy. Pranayama means channeling or regulating this force. Pranayama is the science related to vital force supplying energy and controlling the body mind complex. One can control the rhythms of pranic energy with pranayama and achieve healthy body and mind. Patanjali in his text of Yoga Sutras mentioned pranayama as means of attaining higher states of awareness. He mentions the holding of breath as important practice of reaching Samadhi.

Benefits of Yoga and Pranayama
A growing body of research evidence supports the belief that certain yoga techniques may improve physical and mental health through down-regulation of the hypothalamopituitary adrenal (HPA) axis and the sympathetic nervous system.
1. Stress Management by decreasing levels of salivary cortisol, plasma rennin levels, and 24-h urine nor-epinephrine and epinephrine levels.
2. Decreases heart rate and systolic and diastolic blood pressures (hypothesized that some yoga exercises cause a shift toward parasympathetic nervous system dominance, possibly via direct vagal stimulation)
3. Reductions in low-frequency heart rate variability.
4. Control blood pressure by restoring baroreflex sensitivity.
5. Increases regression and retards progression of atherosclerosis and increases nitric oxide.
6. Help manage hyperlipidemia and obesity by increasing insulin sensitivity.

Guidelines for Pranayama

Empty stomach, preferably at twilight time, in a clean place, with loose cloths, sitting tall on the floor or in the chair with both feet flat on the ground, with total surrendering attitude, asking for the presence of divine. The hands should be placed on knees, facing upward with the mudra of grace or mudra of gnana.
Facing the sun is of great value. Clarity of direction, mind and vision defines the East.

Types of Pranayama

1. **Surya Bhedan** - The meaning of “Surya” is Sun and the meaning of the word “Bhedana” is piercing, enter or breaking through something. It is said to stimulate the brain and increase body heat.

2. **Bhramari** - It is also known as Humming Bee Breath, is a calming breathing practice that soothes the nervous system, increase nitric oxide and helps to connect us with our truest inner nature.

3. **Bhasrika** - It is also known as Bellows Breath, is a heating breathing practice that mimics fanning a fire with a steady flow of air. *Bashtra* is a Sanskrit word meaning "bellows," and it describes the active filling and emptying of the abdomen and lungs during this practice. *Bashtra pranayama* stokes the inner fire of the mind and body, supporting proper digestion on all levels.

4. **Ujjayi** - It is also known as the Breath of Victory, is a widely used pranayama in the yogic tradition. *Ujjayi* comes from the Sanskrit prefix *ud*, which means "bondage" or "binding" as well as "upward" and "expanding." This prefix is combined with the root *ji*, which means "to conquer" or "acquire by conquest." In other words, *ujjayi pranayama* is about obtaining freedom from bondage.
5. **Shitali** - It is also known as Cooling Breath, is a breathing practice that very effectively cools the body, the mind, and the emotions. Sheetal comes from the Sanskrit root *sheet*, which means 'cold' or 'frigid'.* Sheetali translates roughly as ‘that which is calm, passionless, and soothing’.

6. **Sitkari** - According to the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, in addition to its cooling effects, sitkari balances the endocrine system and builds vitality.

7. **Murc** - "Murcha" means “fainting” or “swooning breath” in which the breath is inhaled slowly and retained for an extended period. This exercise promotes happiness of mind, achievement of bliss and removes lustiness.

8. **Plavini** - Plav means floating. Plavini is that which makes one float. Practice of this pranayama demands skill on the part of the student. It is said that he who practices Plavini can do Jalastambha and float on water for any length of time.

**Risk of yoga and pranayama practice**

Although many forms of yoga and pranayama practice are safe, some are strenuous and may not be appropriate for everyone. In particular, elderly individuals, during pregnancy, respiratory, circulatory disorders or those with mobility problems may want to check first with a clinician before choosing yoga as a treatment option.

**References**


5. Importance of Breathing – Dr Shamanthakamani Narendran. MD(Ped) PhD (Yoga Science) http://www.slideshare.net/drshama65/importance-of-breathingpranayamapp