

Yoga Therapy in Urinary Incontinence



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Opinion

Urinary incontinence is defined by the International Continence Society (ICS) as a complaint to any involuntary leakage of urine [1]. Its impact on quality of life is significant, leading to physical and social limitations, shame, and increased rates of depressive symptoms [2]. The pathophysiology of UI is multifactorial, and a wide range of risk factors have been identified such as older age, obesity, gynecological surgery, menopause, pregnancy and childbirth [3-6]. Pelvic floor muscle training (PFMT) is a first-line conservative treatment for urinary incontinence in women [7,8]. The PFMT promote an appropriately timed conscious pelvic floor muscle contractions may increase urethral pressure, improve support of the bladder neck and prevent the urinary leakage [9-11]. Other modalities treatments include: physical therapies (e.g. vaginal cones); behavioural therapies (e.g. lifestyle advice, bladder training); electrical or magnetic stimulation; mechanical devices (e.g. continence pessaries); drug therapies (e.g. anticholinergics (solifenacin, oxybutynin, duloxetine); and surgical interventions including sling procedures and colposuspension [7,8,12,13].

Yoga is a system of philosophy, lifestyle, and physical practice which originated in ancient India, and the popularity of yoga in the West has continued to increase over the past decade. Yoga was originally intended for spiritual advancement however there is an increase interest in therapy or rehabilitation. The health benefits from yoga include the reduction in perceived stress, anxiety, depression, chronic back pain, hypertension and diabetes [13]. A few studies suggest that some yoga breathing, relaxation, and muscle control techniques may assist in the strengthening of the pelvic floor [15,16]. Specific yoga poses that are believed to be helpful and have been tested include the Utkatasana (chair pose), Trikonasana (triangle pose), and the Malasana (squat pose) [17]. Yoga may help improve general body alignment, flexibility, strength, control, and awareness, all of which are thought to assist in strengthening the pelvic floor

muscles [16]. Yoga requires a mindful coordination of body movement and breath with a focus on self-awareness.

Conclusion

In summary, yoga may therefore function as either an alternative method of pelvic floor muscle training or a supplement to such training. However, no trials were found comparing alternative exercises to no treatment. On the other hand, it has not yet been conclusively demonstrated that yoga is effective for the prevention or treatment of urinary incontinence or either as an alternative or an adjunct to pelvic floor muscle training. Further randomised controlled trials are needed before these alternative interventions become routine clinical practice.

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