

Yoga and Body Alignment



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Introduction

Joints and muscles are playing a vital role in maintenance of a good physical appearance. Nowadays our lifestyle has become sedentary which induces poor flexibility, strength and endurance in muscle and ligament [1]. It results in poor alignment which leads to all sorts of problems like musculo-skeletal pain, stiffness, fatigue, impingement and nerve compression like sciatica etc.,

Yoga is a popular form of practice and self-discipline. Proper practice of Yoga gives extreme benefits whereas improper practice can cause a lot of complications. This is due to the disalignment of the body which creates blockage in general flow of body movement. Stretching the physical body in an incorrect position or in timely shifting the body weight can produce injuries [2]. Yogasana is an important limb of Yogic practices which helps to improve endurance and bring alignment. Yoga practices will increase the body flexibility, bring strength and endurance without causing any discomfort, pain and injury.

Principles of alignment during yoga practice

Practicing Yogasana with the principles of alignment, one can stretch and strengthen the entire musculoskeletal system in a healthy balanced way, so we can feel the comfort in each position [3]. These ideologies help to create an ideal biomechanical position for body during movement, and while maintain the posture.

1. To press the weight-bearing area or parts of the body firmly into the ground to enhance support.
2. Use the trunk muscles (e.g. abdominals, erector spinae) to create core stability prior to move and hold the asana for greater strength and internal support.
3. Spine alignment by stabilizing the core in all applicable Yoga postures, and the head follows the movement of the spine. When moving into flexion, extension and twists always start in neutral spine.
4. In all applicable Yogasana poses like Trikonasana, Parsvakonasana, the knees stay in line with ankle joint. While bending the knees, they remain in same line as the hip joints.
5. Shoulder joints are drawn back (retract) naturally and down in the practice of asana, which helps to reduce tension in the neck and shoulder region.

6. During hip flexion, flexing or extending the spine, keep the arms abduct upto shoulder level or alongside the body to reduce strain on the muscles of the lower back.

Importance of body alignment in Yoga practices:

To reduces risk of injury: Yoga makes proper body alignment by evenly coordinate the muscles leads to prevent too much pressure or physical stress over the muscle or joint [4]. It will reduce the abnormal wear and tear of ligaments in joints and muscles strain in the body.

Biomechanical efficiency: From biomechanical perspective, proper aligned joints and muscles will optimize our available power and generate strength in the body which maximizes our performance.

Conserve energy: Good alignment of body during the Yoga practice helps to utilize body's energy efficiently and conserve the energy.

Reduces fatigue: Proper alignment during the practice of Yogasana allows to increase proper blood flow, improves muscles efficiency which translates to less energy usage consequently reduce the fatigue.

Builds strength: Practicing of Yoga in the proper alignment helps to strengthen the supporting muscles and build body strength.

Better energy flow: Good alignment in body creates a channel for free flow of energy throughout the body during the practice of Yoga. Energy flow is not only important for physical health, but it also has a positive impact on mental as well as spiritual health.

Conclusion

Yogasana practice in an aligned way is a better means of connecting and recognizing body's natural rhythm. Alignment plays a key role in body strength and endurance [5]. Yogasana plays very vital role for ensuing the better coordination with physical and mental aspect effectively for promotion of health. Moreover, Yogic practices are prone to impart better equanimity of nervous system across the body which allows the subtle energy to flow smoothly without any hindrances [6]. Yoga practice with

principles of alignment increase the mind body coordination which is the primary objective of Yoga.

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