



YOGA FOR MENOPAUSE- COPE WITH MENOPAUSE THROUGH YOGA

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ABSTRACT

Menopause, also known as "the change" or "change of life," is a normal part of a woman's life. It is a point in time-the last menstrual cycle, the last period. Menopause can be a stark reminder that we all age. For some women, the inevitable process of aging is stressful due to resistance to change and an inability to "let go" of how the body used to look and function. Yoga helps us to meet this with grace and gratitude. Yoga teaches us that everything is impermanent. Building a sense of acceptance for who we are in each period of life is central to the practice of yoga.

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INTRODUCTION

Menopause can be one of the most challenging stages of a woman's life. Every day becomes an adventure when your raging hormones take over. Menopause brings with it fluctuating hormones that mess with your sleep, pack on pounds of belly fat, and make you irritable and less interested in sex. But yoga can help. Yoga practice cut hot flashes by 31% in one study, and other research has found that regularly doing yoga improved libido, mood, and craving control.

Symptoms of Menopause

The list of symptoms associated with menopause is long. Common complaints include hot flashes, night sweats, skin flushing, headaches, mood swings and joint pain, among other things. Although menopause is a natural process through which every female goes, the experience and often times unrelenting symptoms can lead to a great deal of stress.

In addition to the mental toll stress can take, chronic stress can lead to serious physical complications such as an increase in blood pressure and heart rate, which in turn can increase the risk of a heart attack. Stress can also contribute to depression and anxiety. Women who experience stress as a symptom of menopause should seek relief strategies to lower stress levels.

Benefits of Yoga

- Yoga helps modulate mood swings and reduce depression and anxiety by helping to balance a woman's changing hormones. Practicing yoga's relaxing, restorative poses on a regular basis helps ease these

symptoms. Equally important, yoga practice gives you the opportunity to weed out and clear away the mental and emotional debris that is the root cause of many problems associated with menopause.

- Yoga reduces the effects of menopause's hormonal changes by balancing the endocrine system. It soothes out the hormonal and glandular changes that take place during this period.
- Yoga's inverted poses are particularly important during menopause poses as they have a powerful effect on the neuroendocrine system, allowing fresh, oxygenated blood to flow to the glands in the head and neck. In each yoga posture (asana) different organs and glands are placed in various anatomical positions and are supplied with fresh blood, gently massaged, relaxed, toned and stimulated.
- Perhaps the greatest benefit of yoga for women undergoing this great life transition is that the practice helps to instill peace of mind and equanimity of emotion. Many of the mood swings involved with menopause may simply be a general annoyance with the other symptoms one has to endure. With yoga, a greater sense of peace and acceptance is generated which in turn, reduces the symptoms themselves, but also makes it easier for a woman to deal with the symptoms when they do arise
- When many women think of yoga, they conjure up images of twisted poses, chanting, and strange music. But today's yoga movement is much more mainstream and accessible. You'll find that practicing yoga regularly, whether at home or at the local studio, can help calm your nerves, relax your mind, and relieve many of the menopause symptoms you're experiencing.

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- Using meditation as part of your overall yoga lifestyle, in particular, it is beneficial for symptoms of sleep disturbance, and mild hot flashes related to menopause. Benefits of a regular meditation practice include increased sense of calm, enhanced awareness of the body, and improved clarity of mind.
- Yoga is also helpful with another primary symptom of menopause, osteoporosis. Stress and osteoporosis are linked together because as a stress increase so does the production of cortisol, which in turn contributes to a loss of calcium from bones and interferes with new bone growth. Weight bearing has been shown to reduce bone loss.
- Many of the yoga postures incorporate weight bearing into the joints in a safe and controlled manner. Unlike other forms of exercise, yogic postures such as Downward Dog and Upward Dog focus weight through the wrists. Because wrist fractures are some of the most common fractures in aging women, these asana are perfect to address this problem.

Yoga helps in balancing of hormones

Yoga poses stimulate the endocrine system, especially the pituitary gland. This small gland in the center of the brain is involved in the regulation of blood-sugar levels and body temperature, and controls the changes in the hormone levels that occur in menopause.

Yoga's relaxing, rejuvenating inverted poses and other important restorative poses can break the vicious cycle of adrenal exhaustion, stimulation and fatigue. They smooth out the emotional rough edges common during menopause and give us some much-needed time to be quiet. Yoga poses, such as twists and backbends, improve the functioning of the adrenals, helping them to increase the amount of estrogen in the body. These poses also stimulate the kidneys, promoting healthy elimination of metabolic byproducts.

Yoga creates pelvic health

Yoga helps create pelvic health by increasing the flow of blood and oxygen to your reproductive organs and restoring your energy reserves while relaxing the nervous system and balancing the endocrine system. Blood flow is directed to the pelvis, bathing the reproductive organs and glands and helping to balance hormone function. The pose relieves tension and constriction in the abdomen, uterus and vagina.

Yoga promotes cardiac functioning

According to yoga experts, passive, supported backbends gently stretch the heart muscle and the cardiac vessels that supply the heart. This increases blood flow to the heart and helps prevent arterial blockages. Backbends also help maintain the elasticity of blood vessels, and force the heart to contract-lengthening cardiac muscle and enhancing blood flow.

It's important to bear in mind that all menopausal symptoms are related and using yoga to ease the unpleasant effect of one symptom generally leads to better health in the rest of the body. Every yoga pose has a multitude of effects on all the systems of the body

Yoga Poses

Downward Dog: This posture is considered an inversion. Whenever you assume an inverted posture, remember to keep

your eyes open and be aware of your breathing. Slow controlled breathing reduces the feeling of dizziness you may experience as you rise out of the inversion. Focus on the weight-bearing through both hands, ground yourself through your fingers, and palm; turn your toes under, inhale and on the exhale, slowly extend your knees as you push the floor away from you. This results in your hips rising toward the ceiling. The spine retains its natural curve, there is no rounding in the low back (bend your knees to keep the back in position).

Extended Puppy Pose: Assume this posture from an all fours position, with your shoulders over your wrists. Extend your ankles so that the toes point away from your body. Press the floor away with your hands, as you bend at the hip, while keeping your knees firmly on the floor. Your hips will rise, keep the elongation in your spine and engage your arms so that your elbows don't touch the floor. You may rest your forehead on your mat or a folded blanket as long as your neck remains relaxed not extended. Breathe and hold posture for 1 minute.

Wide Legged Standing Forward Bend: Stand with your feet approximately 4 feet apart with your toes pointing forward. Inhale and as you exhale, bend forward from your hips, placing your hands on the floor under your shoulders. Rest your head on the floor if you can; otherwise rest your head securely on a block or folded blankets. Hold posture for 30 seconds. To exit, root your feet firmly into your mat, bend your knees slightly, and slowly extend through your hips until standing. Continue to breathe with control as your rise. If dizziness occurs, continue breathing, and keep eyes open.

Elevated Leg Pose: To enter the pose, sit with your right (Or left) hip touching your support, inhale and exhale as your swing your legs onto the wall while your trunk rolls onto your blankets or bolster. You may have to experiment with the distance in which you place your support away from the wall. Your buttocks do not have to touch the wall, but should be close. Elongate your spine by inhaling, do not tuck your chin, however, allow your chest to rise toward your chin. If you neck seems too flat, use a small rolled towel under the arch of your neck. Typically, I recommend staying in this pose for 3 to 5 minutes, however, you must be comfortable.

Meditation: To begin your meditation practice, find a quiet room where you can sit comfortably in a supported position (either on a blanket, chair, or firm pillow). Sit with your back straight and your hands relaxed on your knees or cupped in your lap. Close your eyes, and pay close attention to your breath. Concentration on your breath gives your mind focus. As thoughts peace comes from non-judgment, with full acceptance of who we are at each moment.

CONCLUSION

As menopause approaches and finally enters, bringing some or all of the above symptoms with it, we can add a solid source of comfort and remedy into our lives through yoga. Yoga is one of the things that a woman can practice to bring her physical, mental and spiritual being back into balance. Once the balance is back, new vigor and well-being comes back and we can once again enjoy life's little pleasures.

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