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Review Article

Prevention Of Menstrual Cramps Through Yoga Asanas

Dr. Shilpa Kumari*, Dr. Ashadeep, Dr. Vaibhav Sharma

Department of Swasthyritta Evum Yoga, Sri Ganganagar College of Ayurvedic Science & Hospital, Tania University, Sri Ganganagar.

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ABSTRACT

Menstrual cramps (dysmenorrhea) are a common concern affecting women worldwide, impacting their daily lives and productivity. While traditional remedies like medication provide relief, a natural and sustainable approach, such as yoga, has shown tremendous promise. This article explores how yoga can help alleviate menstrual cramps by promoting physical, mental, and hormonal balance. We delve into the physiology of menstrual cramps, the science behind yoga's effectiveness, and a detailed explanation of specific yoga asanas that help prevent and manage this discomfort.

INTRODUCTION

The menstrual cycle, a hallmark of reproductive health, is accompanied by numerous physiological and emotional changes. For many women, menstrual cramps pose a recurring challenge, impacting their productivity and well-being. Pain, often linked to uterine muscle contractions, can range from mild to severe. While medical interventions such as analgesics or hormonal therapies are common, they may lead to adverse effects or fail to address the root cause of the pain. *Yoga* offers a holistic, multidimensional solution by integrating physical movement, mindfulness, and regulated breathing. The ability of *yoga* to

address both the physical and emotional aspects of dysmenorrhea has made it an increasingly popular alternative. This article delves deeper into the physiological mechanisms of menstrual cramps and explains how *yoga asanas* prevent or manage these symptoms.

Understanding the Pathophysiology of Menstrual Cramps

Menstrual cramps result from the coordinated contraction and relaxation of uterine muscles. These contractions are necessary for expelling the endometrial lining during menstruation. However,

***Corresponding Author:** Dr. Shilpa Kumari

Address: Department of Swasthyritta Evum Yoga, Sri Ganganagar College of Ayurvedic Science & Hospital, Tania University, Sri Ganganagar.

Email ✉: Shilpa291295@gmail.com

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excessive contractions can cause significant pain, termed dysmenorrhea.

Mechanisms of Pain in Menstrual Cramps:

1. **Prostaglandins:** Prostaglandins are hormone-like compounds that regulate uterine contractions. High levels of prostaglandins during menstruation lead to stronger, more frequent contractions, reducing blood flow to the uterus and causing pain.
2. **Ischemia:** Excessive uterine contractions compress blood vessels, reducing oxygen supply to the uterine muscles (ischemia), further contributing to pain.
3. **Inflammation:** An inflammatory response is triggered by elevated prostaglandins, exacerbating discomfort.
4. **Stress and Neurological Factors:** Stress increases the release of cortisol and amplifies the perception of pain through heightened sensitivity of pain receptors.

By addressing these factors through specific mechanisms, *yoga asanas* provide both preventive and therapeutic relief.

How Yoga Addresses the Pathophysiology of Menstrual Cramps

Yoga's effectiveness lies in its ability to influence physiological, hormonal, and neurological pathways associated with menstrual pain. Here are the mechanisms at play:

1. Reduction of Prostaglandin Levels

- Studies indicate that regular yoga practice lowers levels of prostaglandins in the body, thereby reducing the intensity of uterine contractions and inflammation.

2. Improved Blood Circulation

- *Yoga asanas*, particularly those focusing on the pelvic region, enhance blood flow to the uterus. Increased oxygen delivery reduces ischemia and alleviates pain.

3. Activation of the Parasympathetic Nervous System

- *Yoga* promotes relaxation and stimulates the parasympathetic nervous system. This reduces stress, lowers cortisol levels, and calms overactive pain receptors.

4. Endorphin Release

- *Yoga* triggers the release of endorphins, the body's natural painkillers. These neurotransmitters inhibit the sensation of pain and induce a sense of well-being.

5. Reduction in Muscle Tension

- Stretching and strengthening *asanas* relieve tension in the abdominal and pelvic muscles, minimizing cramp severity.

6. Balancing Hormones

- *Yoga* regulates endocrine function, aiding in hormonal balance. This is crucial in reducing menstrual irregularities and associated discomfort.

7. Anti-inflammatory Effects

- Certain *asanas* possess an anti-inflammatory effect, reducing the localized inflammation in the pelvic region.

***Yoga asanas* for Preventing Menstrual Cramps**

1. *Supta Baddha Konasana* (Reclined Bound Angle Pose)



- **Benefits:** Opens the pelvic area, improves circulation, and calms the nervous system.
- **Mechanism:** Reduces uterine ischemia and stimulates blood flow to the reproductive organs.
- **How to Perform:** Lie on your back, bring the soles of your feet together, and allow your knees to fall outward. Hold for 5 minutes.

2. *Balasana* (Child's Pose)

- **Benefits:** Relieves tension in the lower back and stretches the pelvic muscles.
- **Mechanism:** Promotes relaxation by activating the parasympathetic nervous system.
- **How to Perform:** Kneel on the floor, extend your arms forward, and rest your forehead on the mat. Hold for 2–3 minutes.

3. *Setu Bandhasana* (Bridge Pose)

- **Benefits:** Strengthens the lower back and alleviates pelvic discomfort.
- **Mechanism:** Enhances blood flow and relaxes the uterine muscles.
- **How to Perform:** Lie on your back, bend your knees, and lift your hips while keeping your shoulders grounded.

4. *Bhujangasana* (Cobra Pose)

- **Benefits:** Stretches the abdominal muscles and improves flexibility.
- **Mechanism:** Reduces muscular stiffness and promotes hormonal balance.
- **How to Perform:** Lie on your stomach, place your hands under your shoulders, and lift your upper body gently.

5. *Apanasana* (Knees-to-Chest Pose)

- **Benefits:** Relieves lower back pain and enhances circulation.
- **Mechanism:** Releases tension in the pelvic and abdominal muscles.
- **How to Perform:** Hug your knees to your chest while lying on your back and rock gently side to side.

Pranayama for Stress Relief and Pain Management

Breathing exercises complement *yoga asana* by reducing stress and improving oxygen delivery. Key techniques include:

1. *Nadi Shodhana* (Alternate Nostril Breathing): Balances energy channels and reduces anxiety.
2. *Bhramari* (Bee Breathing): Creates a soothing effect on the nervous system.
3. *Anulom Vilom*: Enhances blood flow and promotes relaxation.

Lifestyle Modifications for Menstrual Health

Yoga's benefits are maximised when paired with healthy lifestyle practices. Recommendations include:

- **Hydration:** Prevents muscle cramping.
- **Anti-inflammatory Diet:** Incorporate turmeric, ginger, and omega-3 fatty acids.
- **Consistency:** Regular practice of yoga is essential for lasting results.
- **Stress Management:** Meditation and mindfulness reduce stress-induced pain.



CONCLUSION

Menstrual cramps, although common, need not define a woman's monthly experience. By addressing the physiological and hormonal aspects of dysmenorrhea, *yoga* offers a sustainable and empowering approach to menstrual health. Through the regular practice of *asana*, *pranayama*, and mindful living, women can significantly reduce pain, promote overall well-being, and embrace their cycles with confidence.

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