

Yes, **yoga** can help control your blood sugar

The new and upcoming role of yoga in diabetes management

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Om or Aum, considered a sacred syllable and mantra, is used during chanting in Hinduism and yoga practice. Unbeknown to many, chanting this mantra is not all about spirituality. According to an article entitled “Therapeutic Role of Yoga in Type 2 Diabetes” by Arkiath Veetil Raveendran et al., published online at the Endocrinology and Metabolism 2018, scientific analyses showed that chanting om is based on the physics of sound, vibrations, resonance, which has a positive influence on health. It results in brain stabilization, removal of negative thoughts, increased energy, mental improvements, and relaxation of the body in a matter of minutes.

When you lie in a supine position and chant om, your mind and body experience a relaxation response that is clinically significant in managing blood pressure and blood glucose, according to a study by Bhavanani AB et al on the immediate cardiovascular effects of Pranava relaxation in patients with hypertension and diabetes.

Yoga practice has often been associated with spirituality, relaxation, and mindfulness since ancient times. Unfortunately, its benefits in alleviating medical symptoms and being an adjunct therapy to chronic illnesses such as diabetes have been underappreciated until recent years.

Since the principles of yoga practice are based on the intimate connection between the mind and body, it does promote health in many ways. It improves physical fitness, promotes relaxation, and self-awareness, and impacts one’s discipline on food intake and exercise. Diet and physical activities are part and parcel of the triangle of diabetes care.

In addition to the abovementioned health benefits, yoga plays a huge role in managing stress.

Pranayama or yogic breathing is a slow, controlled, and regulated breathing practice that regulates the heart rate in addition to the soothing effect on a person’s mind. The impact of stress on blood glucose levels is often downplayed. According to Mahajan AS’s research, however, on the role of yoga in hormonal homeostasis, stress increases the risk and severity of diabetes. Specific glands and parts of the nervous system are being stimulated during stressful episodes, which lead to the production of hormones and neurotransmitters linked to poor control of blood glucose. Pro-inflammatory proteins called cytokines are also released. This leads to insulin resistance, a condition found in patients with type-2 diabetes.

Aside from breathing exercises, there is an aspect of yoga practice that is also associated with health benefits for individuals with diabetes. Yoga postures, also known as asanas, have a positive effect on the utilization and breakdown of glucose or sugar. The asanas also aid in the redistribution of fat cells. Furthermore, there is an increased blood supply to muscles that causes an increased rate of burning calories or energy. More calories burned equate to more sugar used up, which could help with weight management and keeping blood sugar in check.

Individuals with diabetes have damaged beta cells found in the pancreas. These cells produce the hormone insulin necessary to regulate the blood glucose level. Studies have shown that abdominal stretching during yoga exercises can regenerate the pancreatic cells thereby improving the production of insulin, utilization of glucose by the

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Further studies on the role of yoga practice in diabetes management are needed. Research has proven, however, the benefits a person living the sweet life can get from yoga. It is important to learn the practice only under the guidance of a qualified or certified yoga professional to prevent injuries and reap the health benefits.