



## Surya Namaskara: A key to good health

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### Abstract

Purpose of this article is to describe the health benefits of Surya Namaskara. It is a key to physical, mental and spiritual well-being. The musculo-skeletal system and soft organs of the body are strengthened with practicing Suryanamaskara. It provides concentration, calmness and train our neuro-muscular system. Spiritual well-being affects positively on human mind and develops stability, balance and adjustment in life. Surya Namaskara is a key to remove stress and tension. This article gives understanding about the methods of performing Suryanamaskara, its benefits and precautions while performing Suryanamaskara.

**Keywords:** Asanas, Surya Namaskara

### 1. Introduction

Yoga is being practiced in daily routine, sports and medical line to gain overall health benefits and to cure various physical and physiological and psychological problems. The main aim of yoga is to develop overall health of human being. Yogic Asanas are the 'Physical Positions' or 'Postures' which co-ordinate with movements to hold the position to stretch and strengthen different parts of body. Surya Namaskara called sun salutation is an integral part of yogic approach. Surya Namaskar includes 12 asanas (postures) organized in a specific pattern. In other words it is an ancient technique of yoga, performed in sequence while facing the rising sun. Asanas or postures are to stabilize body and mind through static stretching. In Surya Namaskara, the alternating pattern of backward and forward bending strengthen spinal cord and limbs to a maximum range. Surya Namaskara benefits our overall health including muscular system, cardio-vascular system, endocrine system, nervous system, respiration system, gastro intestinal functioning and skeletal system etc. Some researches provide evidence that even single Surya Namaskara is enough to lower body fat and cholesterol and to strengthen whole body. Sasi *et al.* (2011) [5] conducted a study on the effects of Surya Namaskara and found in the results that it has therapeutic value and is a life giving process. Surya Namaskara is combination of Asanas and Pranayama. Further, they found in the results that Surya Namaskara improved overall health, physical fitness and cardio-respiratory endurance of trainees. That's why Surya Namaskara has become an integral part of Physical Education in many Public and Private Schools.

These days Surya Namaskara is recommended by the yoga experts, due to its quality of including various poses to be performed in less time. Its benefit for healthy life includes, major stretch to large muscular group and effects on soft organs like liver, heart, cellular metabolism, hormonal system/endocrine system. Surya Namaskar stretches Stomach and Intestine Organs and Abdominal Organs are toned. Surya Namaskar influences our Hypothalamus and pineal gland and

proves better to stop pineal degeneration. It develops physical health, mental health and spiritual health when performed with controlling of breath. Today schedule of life is too busy due to modernization but Surya Namaskara is best for those peoples who have less time to devote for their health. Surya Namaskara stimulates every large Muscle group and stretches 97% of body muscles which improves strength of muscles and physical fitness. It is a key to develop static and dynamic balance of body, Joint strength, Flexibility and neuromuscular co-ordination. Surya Namaskar benefits entire endocrine system and improves will power. It is recognized better to enhance solar plexus which is helpful to increase creativity. The Solar plexus (Located behind the Navel, which is known central point of human body) is called second brain and considered to be connected with the Sun.

### Poses of Surya Namaskar and method of performing

1. Pranamasana (1<sup>st</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup> pose)
2. Hasta Uttanasana (2<sup>nd</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup> pose)
3. Hastapadasana (3<sup>rd</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup> pose)
4. Ashwa Sanchalanasana (4<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> pose)
5. Adho Mukha Svanasana (parvatasana (5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> pose))
6. Ashtanga Namaskara (6<sup>th</sup> pose)
7. Bhujangasana (7<sup>th</sup> pose)
8. Adho Mukha Svanasana/ Parvatasana
9. Ashwa Sanchalanasana
10. Hastapadasana
11. Hasta Uttanasana
12. Pranamasana

#### 1. Pranamasana (Prayer Pose)

Prayer pose is known as pranamasana. In this pose stand exact with folding hands and exhale breath normally. It is 1<sup>st</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> pose. It is good for concentration, relaxation and soothing.

#### 2. Hasta Uttanasana (Raised arms pose)

It is 2<sup>nd</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> pose of Surya Namaskara. In this pose arms are raised up above the crown from pranamasana. Breath is

inhaled normally and Neck and trunk is bent slightly. It strengthens Intestine, Abdominal and chest muscles.

### 3. Padahasthasana (Hand to Foot pose)

It is 3<sup>rd</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> pose of Surya Namaskara. Body is bent forward while trying to touch the floor with both hands. Breath is exhaled. It improves flexibility, strengthens muscles of hands, feet and trunk. It helps to improve digestion and concentration.

### 4. Ashwa Sanchalanasana (The Equestrian Pose)

It is 4<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> pose of Surya Namaskara. In this pose left leg is stretched as far back as possible and right knee is bent from padahasthasana while inhaling the breath normally. While looking straight ahead the hands should be straight with fingers touching the floor and back should be tilted to make an arch. The same steps should be repeated while changing legs. This Asana is helpful to increase flexibility, muscle strength, balance and concentration.

### 5. Parvatasana (The Mountain Pose)

Parvatasana or mountain pose is 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> pose of Surya Namaskara series. In this pose right leg is taken backward and placed parallel to the left leg from ashwa sanchalanasana while exhaling. At the same time Buttocks are raised and head is placed between hands while placing the hands straight, supporting the weight of the body. This pose is helpful in strengthening the muscle of upper and lower body and affects positively on nervous system and blood circulatory system.

### 6. Ashtanga Namaskara (Eight limbed salutation)

It is 6<sup>th</sup> pose of Surya Namaskara series of asana. In this asana the body touches the ground in eight locations – The head, the chest, two palms, two knees and two toes that's why it is called Ashtanga Namaskara. While performing this asana body is lowered to the ground in such a way that eight Angas should touch the ground. Breath is exhaled while trying to lift other parts in air. In this pose muscles of specialised areas are strengthened and have positive effects on digestive and respiratory systems.

### 7. Bhujangasana (The Cobra Pose)

It is the 7<sup>th</sup> pose of Surya Namaskara. In this pose body will be in prone position and hands are placed under chest. Upper body is lifted upward while straightening both hands and head is tilted backward. The position of this Asana resembles with cobra or snake, that's why called cobra pose. This asana is helpful in strengthening the muscles of lower back, hand and chest and improves flexibility of Spine, urogenital system, reproductive system, stomach and intestine.

### Benefits of Surya Namaskara

Surya Namaskara is a combination of Asanas and Pranayamas and when both are performed in same time results are more beneficial. Researches proved that yoga is a key to overall health. Bera and Rajapurkar (1993) <sup>[1]</sup>, studied the effects of yogic training on cardio-vascular endurance, anaerobic power, body weight, body density and endurance of high school boys and found significant improvement in all selected variables. Bhutkar *et al.* (2008) <sup>[2]</sup>, studied 78 subjects (48 male and 30

female), to measure the effects of six months Surya Namaskara training on cardio-respiratory efficiency. Results measures the decreased resting pulse rate and blood pressure and increased cardio-respiratory efficiency of all the subjects. So, on the basis of review of different studies benefits of surya Namaskara are followings:-

1. Remove constipation and improves digestion.
2. It simulates spinal cord, Nervous system, which improve concentration and brain functioning.
3. Improves oxygen include capacity of lungs and affects positively of respiratory organs and helpful to prevent tuberculosis.
4. Helpful in strengthening heart muscles and improves blood circulation and controls blood pressure.
5. Improve flexibility and mobility of joints.
6. Improves physical and mental balance.
7. It develops stamina.
8. It improves reproductive system.
9. It is a key for weight loos.
10. Improves digestion and metabolism of body.
11. It is helpful in managing menstrual problems such as menstrual cramps and menopause stage.
12. It is helpful to bring out impurities of skin from sweat and improve blood circulation of skin and provide glow to skin and deal with onset of wrinkles and aging.
13. Strengthen digestive system including stomach, intestine, pancreas and liver etc.
14. It is helpful in simulating endocrine glands, stabilizes activity of endocrine and thyroid glands.
15. It improves memory and concentration.
16. It is helpful in maintaining the balance of vata, pitha and kapha of which body is meant.
17. Sun sanitation is helpful in removing impurities of body.
18. It is helpful to cure postural deformities especially bow legs and knock knee.
19. It develops immunity of body and resists fatigue and diseases.
20. It increases more concentration, optimism and self Confidence.
21. Beneficial to increase height.
22. Helpful in increasing sports performance.
23. Helpful in cure of coronary artery diseases, diabetes and hypertension.
24. Helpful in reducing anxiety, stress and depression.

### Precautions

1. Surya Namaskara should be performed while facing sun, which will prove more beneficial to activate solar plexus.
2. Proper warm up should be done before Surya Namaskara.
3. Each pose should be hold for better effects.
4. Focus on breathing should be done, while backward bending breath should be inhaled and while bending the spinal cord forward breath should be exhaled and there should be proper synchronization between breath and poses. For beginners professional guidance will help more.
5. Don't eat or drink before and after performing the Sun Salutation.
6. In case of medical issues or any health problem Surya Namaskara is not needed to be performed without advice

of doctor or expert.

7. Surya Namaskara should be performed at peaceful place and in fresh air for soothing effects on mind, body and soul.
8. Surya Namaskara will be more fruitful with a proper diet plan including a proper ratio of fat, protein, carbohydrates, minerals, vegetables and fruits and intake of 8 -10 glasses of water.
9. Regular practice of Surya Namaskara will have positive effects on overall health development.
10. Women should avoid Surya Namaskara during menstrual period and pregnancy.
11. Immediate bathing should be avoided after Surya Namaskara. There should be a gap of at least 30 minutes.

### Conclusion

Surya Namaskara is a time saving practice which is equally beneficial for a layman, patients and sports persons. It is useful practice for those also, who have very less time to devote for their health. In modern scenario, yoga is being practiced in sports to enhance their performance level because yoga, pranayama and surya namaskara improves flexibility, balance, cardio-vascular efficiency, balance, stability, strength of anatomical and physiological organs and above all reduces stress, tension, anxiety and depression. Surya namaskara is beneficial for diabetic patients and plays a vital role in prevention of diseases. Researches in the field of yoga prove the validity of its benefits in different fields. Sharma *et al* (2008), examined the effects of yoga on subjective well being of normal individual and patients having coronary artery diseases, diabetes and hypertension. Results of the study prove that yoga based training programme is helpful in stress management, healthy lifestyle and prevention from diseases.

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