



OBESITY AND ITS MANAGEMENT BY YOGA

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ABSTRACT

Due to modern lifestyle and lethargies and consumption of fatty, sweet substances etc. sthaulya or obesity and its complications are likely to occur at any age. Yoga always focuses on the mind and body benefits. Yoga asanas, pranayama helps a lot in overcoming obesity and obesity related problems. The ideal way to break the etiopathogenesis of obesity is through the modification of diet, conduct and actions advised in yogic and ayurvedic texts. Obesity and yoga management has taken center stage in most yoga fitness programs in the recent years. Yoga and its methods for weight loss have been known for ages. The yogic way of life is a balanced life, bringing good physical and mental health. Once the cause of obesity is understood, it can be managed quite well by balanced principles of living.

KEYWORDS: Modern lifestyle, lethargies, consumption, sthaulya, etiopathogenesis.

INTRODUCTION

Obesity is one of the major causes of morbidity and mortality worldwide. Obesity mammoth is stamping the universe by its giant feet due to this people are suffocated with its complications like reduced lifespan, debility, risk of cardio-vascular diseases, diabetes mellitus, etc. Sedentary lifestyle, improper dietary habits like having junk food, fried food, sweets and all are the main cause of obesity. The period of Vedas and ancient texts have also mentioned obesity and its complications due to overeating habits accompanied with sedentary lifestyle.

Lifestyle modifications in the form of yogic practices like asanas, pranayama, nadishodhana help to bring about physical and mental equipoise along with opening a gateway of spiritual path.

What is Obesity?

Overweight and obesity are defined as abnormal or excessive fat accumulation that presents a risk to health. A crude population measure of obesity is the body mass index (BMI), a person's weight (in kilograms) divided by the square of his or her height (in metres). A person with a BMI of 30 or more is generally considered obese. A person with a BMI equal to or more than 25 is considered overweight.

Obesity is medically defined as a condition where your Body Mass Index (BMI) is higher than 30. People with

BMI in the range between 25 and 30 are considered overweight while those with BMI above 30 are considered obese. The healthy range for BMI is between 18.5 and 25.

Table for Bmi Category.

Normal (healthy weight)	From 18.5 to 25
Overweight	From 25 to 30
Obese Class I (Moderately obese)	From 30 to 35
Obese Class II (severely obese)	From 35 to 40
Obese Class III (very severely obese)	Over 40

WHO Facts For Obesity

- Worldwide obesity has nearly tripled since 1975.
- In 2016, more than 1.9 billion adults, 18 years and older, were overweight. Of these over 650 million were obese.
- 39% of adults aged 18 years and over were overweight in 2016, and 13% were obese.
- Most of the world's population live in countries where overweight and obesity kills more people than underweight.
- 41 million children under the age of 5 were overweight or obese in 2016.
- Over 340 million children and adolescents aged 5-19 were overweight or obese in 2016.

What causes Obesity?

The simplest explanation for obesity is based on food intake. If the intake of calories is more than the expenditure of energy in our body, then the excess food gets converted to proteins and fats, which gets stored in the body for future use. If your calorie intake exceeds your daily need, it can lead to deposit of fat in the body and causes obesity in a long run. Similarly, if you don't burn enough calories through proper exercise or work, then the excess calories can also get converted to body fat.

Common Health Consequences of Overweight and Obesity

Raised BMI is a major risk factor for noncommunicable diseases such as

- Cardiovascular diseases (mainly heart disease and stroke), which were the leading cause of death in 2012;
- diabetes;
- Musculoskeletal disorders (especially osteoarthritis – a highly disabling degenerative disease of the joints);
- Some cancers (including endometrial, breast, ovarian, prostate, liver, gallbladder, kidney, and colon).

The risk for these non-communicable diseases increases with increases in Body mass index (BMI).

Childhood obesity is associated with a higher chance of obesity, premature death and disability in adulthood. But in addition to increased future risks, obese children experience breathing difficulties, increased risk of fractures, hypertension, early markers of cardiovascular disease, insulin resistance and psychological effects. So, the basic cause of obesity boils down to two factors – the excess food intake and the lack of exercise and physical work.

Obesity and Its Management with Yoga

Obesity and Yogic management is based on controlled and balanced diet, yoga postures or asanas and breathing techniques. Consuming only the amount of food that we really need, along with regular exercise, performing intermittent water fasts, pranayama, and yoga asanas can give relief to overweight and obese people. While using these methods one should have realistic weight loss expectations, as the process may take time, even months.

Yoga is an ancient technique that has always aimed at promoting holistic living through better lifestyle, improved food habits and a physical regime. Being a natural technique that focuses on controlled breathing through various postures, yoga is a completely harm free and a perfect alternate for allopathic weight-loss pills. Whether BMI is abysmally high or one just believe in staying fit, yoga caters to all.

Yoga and Food Control

Yoga is all about awareness. Most of us don't know how much we eat or the amount of calories that we consume. Is it higher than what we really need? Do we follow a balanced diet for our daily requirements? How many times do we eat while watching the TV and not knowing how much we have consumed? Do we eat only when we are hungry or do we eat just out of boredom? These are the self-introspection that we have to do. Many people eat food just to overcome depression. They end up being overweight due to the excess calories consumption.

Following are yoga techniques that one can start with to shed your weight.

The practice of yoga brings about awareness in all our actions. Performing postures with breath awareness makes us conscious of our actions. Every act becomes a conscious act. By studying our actual daily calorie requirement, we will become aware of the right amount of food to consume per day. Those who are already overweight can consider intermittent fasting on pure water or juices. Many do a 24-hour water fast once every week. This not only reduces weight, but also detoxifies the body and gives you a sense of lightness.

Other than the quantity of food, one should also analyze the quality of the food. Reduce fatty, processed and fried food. Include more of fresh fruits and vegetables in your diet. Also, reduce the quantity of red meat as it can increase the risk of coronary diseases. Sticking to a vegetarian diet is advisable for at least few days every week.

Yogic breathing or Pranayama for Obesity

It is said in the yogic text *Hatha Yoga Pradeepika* and others that practice of pranayama make the body slim and fit. Pranayama can help to burn excessive fat in the body. There are two pranayama practices that are good for weight reduction – *Kapalabhati* and *Anulom Viloma Pranayama*.

Kapalabhati or the skull cleansing breath involves forceful exhalation and normal inhalation. This is done in a comfortable sitting posture with erect spine. The belly is drawn in with every forceful exhalation and filled again with normal inhalation. This is known to reduce the fat around the belly.

Anuloma Viloma Pranayama or the alternate nostril breathing technique also helps to reduce weight. This pranayama is said to generate heat in the body and to burn down excessive fat.

One can also practice simple yogic breathing which involves deep inhalation from the belly, chest and neck which relaxes the mind and clears depression and anxiety. This will give more awareness of wrong food habits that needs to be overcome to reduce your weight.

Yoga Postures for Obesity

There are many yoga postures or asana that can help with weight reduction. Obese people cannot perform all the postures as it requires good flexibility of the body. Do not over strain; should do what is comfortable for one.

Sitting: Sukhasana, Padmasana, Vakrasana, Yogamudrasana, Paschimottanasana, Gomukhasana.

Standing: Trikonasana, Virbhadrasana

Lying: Bhujangasana, Pawanmuktasana, Dhanurasana, Naukasana, Halasana, Setubandhanasana, Shavasana.

One of the best ways to burn calories is the *Surya Namaskara* or the Sun Salutation postures done in the early morning. It is a series of 12 postures performed in sequence. When done briskly, it is said to burn more calories than doing a workout or going for a morning jog. Even if one cannot do all the 12 postures perfectly, one should do as much as one can, maintaining the sequence correctly. It sure is a way to make the body flexible and reduce weight.

Many people may not be obese, but still suffer from fat around the belly. This can be reduced by doing asanas like *Mayurasana* or peacock pose.

If one finds *Mayurasana* difficult to perform, then do *Hamsasana* or the Swan Pose. Both help to put pressure against the abdomen and relieves belly fat.

There are several other postures that are good for obesity.

Pawanmuktasana, Ardha Matsyendrasana, Gomukhasana, Vajrasana, Paschimottanasana, Trikonasana, Pada Hastasana, Yoga Mudrasana, etc. are few to name. In fact, most yogic postures will help to bring the body to perfect shape and to reduce unwanted fat in the body. One can consult a qualified yoga instructor for the right combination of postures for everyone's body condition.

Thus, weight reduction can be achieved by watchful living, practice of yogic postures and breathing exercises, food awareness and regular fasting methods.

CONCLUSION

Mechanisms by which yoga may assist with weight loss or maintenance include the following:

- a) Energy expenditure during yoga sessions.
- b) Also help to reduce back and joint pains.
- c) Heightening mindfulness, improving mood, and reducing stress, which may help to reduce food intake.
- d) Allowing individuals to feel more connected to their bodies,

Leading to enhanced awareness of satiety and the discomfort of overeating. Thus, Yoga appears promising as a way to assist with lifestyle and behavioral change, weight loss, and weight maintenance.

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