

Yoga Therapy for Eating Disorders

Yoga, both Yin and Yang forms, are calming yet strangely energizing. It's positive. It allows you connect, listen to, and understand your body. It reinforces the importance of having a strong, sound body as well as a strong, sound mind that work in connection to one another. These are all staples in each of our recoveries.

Anorexia and other eating disorders are viewed as "*a dysfunction of the first chakra in the yogic energetic system.*" A recent study has shown, "*Yoga practitioners reported less self-objectification, greater satisfaction with physical appearance, and fewer disordered eating attitudes compared to non-yoga practitioners. Through yoga, this study suggests that women may have intuitively discovered a way to buffer themselves against messages that tell them that only a thin and 'beautiful' body will lead to happiness and success.*" "*Yoga, highly therapeutic and relatively non-threatening, is the ideal therapy: a gentle reawakening of the mind and a soft embrace of the body, all helping to get patients back into the land of healthy living.*"

Eating disorders are complex and potentially life-threatening conditions that arise from a combination of behavioral, emotional, psychological, interpersonal, biological, and social factors. They are viewed as a **dysfunction of the first chakra** in the yogic energetic system. Women with eating disorders often use food and the control of food in an attempt to numb or avoid feelings and emotions that are over-whelming.



Anorexia is marked with pronounced weight loss, triggered off by emotional factors such as low self-esteem and a feeling of not being in control, induce this condition. The symptoms include an acute preoccupation with body size which leads to very low food intake, and excessive exercising.

Yoga can be an effective tool to restore the imbalances in both the body and the mind that occur with eating disorders. Yoga has a profound ability to balance the emotions and has been shown to help relieve depression, anger and anxiety and to promote equanimity: a calm, clear focused mind. Yoga can also promote self-esteem and a positive body image, which play primary roles in eating disorders, through the cultivation of non-judgment, confidence, self-acceptance, openness and inner strength. Physically, a regular yoga practice can help rebuild the strength, energy and bone density that is damaged and lost with Anorexia.

1. At first, supine floor poses should be given. These poses decompress the spine safely
2. Next, yoga poses can be given that combine *dynamic/rhythmic movements* with *holding/static poses* that are inherently strengthening and allow the client to focus on and identify (pitta) the muscles that are being strengthened, including visualizing how the muscles are building stronger bones.
3. Later, when core stability has been established, adding creative weight-bearing and balance-enhancing concepts can help build stronger muscles and stimulate bone growth.

CHAKRAS:

Yogic science recognizes that physical, emotional and spiritual health is activated by a system of CHAKRAS said to be located within the spinal column. Energy lies coiled within these CHAKRAS and has to be awakened for self - realization.

The Meaning of Chakras

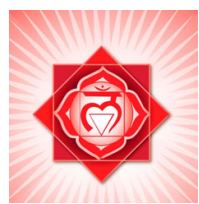


"Chakra" means wheel or ring in Sanskrit and our personal chakras have energy coiled within them, located along the spine and head. Chakras are the critical junctions which determine the state of the body and mind. Just as the brain controls physicals mental and intellectual functions through the nerve cells or neurons, chakras taps the prana or cosmic energy which is within all livings beings and transform it into spiritual energy. This is spread through the body by the "nadis" or channels.

Being invisible chakras are tangible only through their effects. They can be accessed once the student of yoga has achieved in of yoga when the ego self merges with the divine self..... OUR ESSENCE

There are 11 chakras of which 7 are crucial and the others dependent. The most important is the Sahasrara chakra where prakriti shakti or energy unites with purusha shakti or soul.

1. Muladhara, the Root Chakra



The lowest of the seven chakras sits at the bottom of the pelvic floor, and it is called Muladhara, which means root support. Here sleeps the mighty kundalini energy in Her form as the serpent with the tail in its mouth. When this red chakra is over active there is too much focus on the physical. These people are too physical, too money minded and materialistic and deny the finer side of life. They have no compassion and can be violent. A balanced and healthy muladhara gives a firm sense of security, rootedness, unshakeable inner strength and the feeling of being comfortable and safe in the world. To have a healthy muladhar you need to conquer your fears, balance the material and spiritual sides of life and also keep your body fit and healthy. When awakened by yogic means this chakra gives great physical strength, incredible stamina, complete power over the body and robust health.

4.

2. Swadhistan, the Sex and Identity Chakra.

The second chakra sits at the bottom of the spine and is called Swadhistan, which means 'ones own home'. Our sense of identity is based in this moon silver chakra, and it is also the sex and pleasure center. When overactive the person is hyper sexual and lives only for sensation. When it is under active there is no enjoyment of life and no sex drive. The person lives life as if it is a burden. They are often pessimists, and lack a sense of humor. They are also unsure of themselves, indecisive, lack a firm identity, are moody and can be easily swayed. When this chakra is balanced all appetites are in control, the person can seek pleasure and enjoy life without making that the overwhelming drive. To have a healthy swadhistan you need to work on your self esteem, use creative ways to express your emotions freely and learn to enjoy life.



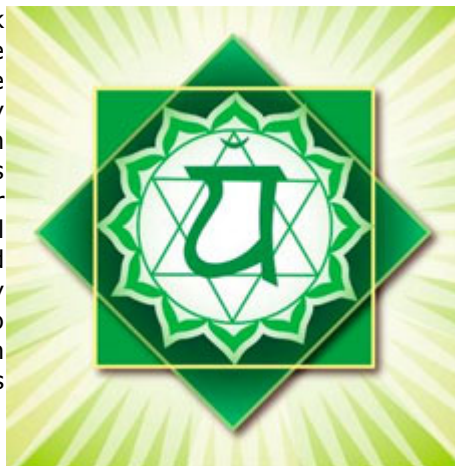
3. Manipur, the Power Center.

The third chakra, Manipur is located at the level of the navel. Its name means 'city of jewels'. This fiery chakra deals with energy, power and heat. When it is over active the whole life is spent in the search for power. When it is under active the person feels powerless and a victim, helpless in the face of a bullying world. When in balance it gives a strong feeling of power and centeredness, without trying to dominate others. If you want a healthy manipur you must stop trying to control or change others and look for the power within instead. When awakened this chakra gives control over heat and cold, endless energy and the psychic power of healing.



4. Anahat, the Heart Chakra

The fourth chakra is Anahat, 'unstruck sound', sound which is beyond the situated in the center of the chest at the overactive the person may be emotionally prone to drastic mood changes. Often an with a weak manipur and the person tends stand up on their own feet. When under mental chakra. This leads to the total balance the person is full of love and and people in caring professions usually healthy anahat you need to be able to compassion openly and joyfully. When beginning of the spiritual path and opens



physical realm. This blue chakra is heart level. When this chakra is out of control, too sentimental, and overblown heart chakra is combined to be led by other people rather than active there is often an over strong suppression of feeling. When in compassion. Social workers, healers, use a lot of anahat energy. To have a express your feelings of love and awakened this chakra is the the psychic power of telepathy.

5. Vishuddhi, the Mind Chakra

The fifth chakra, Vishuddha is at the throat, and its name means purity. This smokey purple chakra is the mind chakra. It deals with the powers of the rational and the logical. When overactive the person is too critical, fanatical, sarcastic and judgmental. They argue and criticize, make hurtful jokes and must always be right. When under active the person does not use the mind at all. In old age this can show up as loss of memory. A balanced mind chakra gives a clear mind but also compassion of heart since it is balanced by a healthy heart chakra. This chakra is balanced when you learn to be without judgment and without criticism. And when you use the mind to learn rather than tear others



down. This chakra when awakened enables one to hear the voices of inner guides, teachers and also opens up intuition.

6. Ajna Chakra, the Third Eye

The sixth chakra, located in the center of the forehead, is called Ajna which means, 'command ' center. The name indicates that mastery of this blue-white chakra gives control over all the other chakras and the body as a whole. This is why ancients wore the bindi here to remind themselves of this powerful chakra. The third eye chakra, when opened, gives clairvoyance and also control over the whole chakra system.



7. Sahasrara, the Crown Chakra

The uppermost of the seven chakras is Sahasrara whose name means thousand petalled lotus. This chakra is often seen as a brilliant golden light around the head. the very last to open. Yogic tradition chakra have total control over life and choose to, and in death their soul leaves this chakra, which means that the human return.



Sahasrara is the ultimate chakra and asserts that those who open this death. They can die only when they from the top of the head, through incarnation is over and they will not

awakening the, divine energy within every uncoil and alert the chakras. In the causes the charas to vibrate and to circulated all over the body through the chakras are transformed as divine energy To achieve self -realization, persistent conquer the 6 main obstacles to happiness- desire, anger, greed, infatuation, pride and envy .

The practice of yoga is directed at human being. [Asanas](#) and [pranayama](#) process the nadis are activated. This generate energy which is then nadis. The emotions rooted in the is awakened and circulated.

rigorous practice of yoga will help to

TADASANA SAMASTHITHI

1. Stand in your bare feet on a smooth and even [surface](#). Keep your feet together, with your heels touching the wall. Beginners may find it easier to keep their feet 5cm (2 in) apart.
2. Stretch your arms along your sides, with the [palms](#) facing your thighs, and your fingers pointing to the floor. Stretch your neck upward, keeping the muscles soft and passive.
3. Distribute your weight evenly on the inner and outer edges of your feet, and on your toes and heels. Tighten your kneecaps and open the back of each knee. Turn in the front of your thighs. Tighten your buttocks. Pull in your lower abdomen, and lift your chest.
4. Keep your head erect and look straight ahead. Breathe evenly and with awareness. Experience your body and mind as an integrated whole and feel the surge of energy. Stay in the pose for 30 - 60 seconds.



TADASANA URDHVA HASTASANA

1. Stand in your bare feet in **Tadasana** on an even, uncovered surface. Exhale, and stretching from your waist, lift your arms in front of you, to shoulder-level. Keep your palms open and facing each other.
2. Raise your arms above your head, perpendicular to the floor. Stretch your arms and fingers. Push your shoulder blades into your body.
3. Stretch your arms further up from your shoulders, keeping them parallel to each other. Extend your wrists, palms, and fingers toward the **ceiling**. Feel the stretch along both sides of your body.
4. Pull in your lower abdomen. Turn your wrists so that the palms face front. Hold the pose for 20-30 seconds. Breathe evenly.



TADASANA URDHVA BADDHA HASTASANA

1. Stand in your bare feet in **Tadasana** against a wall, on an even, uncovered surface. Bring your arms toward your chest, with your palms facing the chest. Interlock your fingers firmly, from the base of the knuckles, with the little finger of your left hand lower than the little finger of the right hand (see inset).
2. Turn your interlocked palms inside out (see inset). Exhale, and stretch your arms out in front of you at shoulder-level. Then inhale, and raise your arms above your head until they are perpendicular to the floor. Extend your arms fully and lock your elbows. Feel the stretch in your palms. Hold the pose for 30 - 60 seconds.



TADASANA PASCHIMA NAMASKAR

1. Stand in your bare feet in **Tadasana** on an even, uncovered surface. Gently turn your arms in and out a few times. Take them behind you and join your fingertips, pointing them to the floor. Rest your thumbs on your lower back. Move your elbows back and rotate your wrists, so that your fingertips turn and point first toward your back, and then upward.
2. Press your palms together, and move them up your back until they are between your shoulder blades. Keep your palms joined from the base to the fingertips. Push your elbows down, to stretch your upper arms and chest. Focus on keeping your chest and armpits open. Keep your neck and shoulders relaxed. Hold the pose for 30-60 seconds. Breathe evenly.



TADASANA GOMUKHASANA

1. Stand in your bare feet in [Tadasana](#) on an even, uncovered surface. Take your left arm behind you and place the back of your left palm on the middle of your back. Raise your right arm. Bend your right elbow and move your hand down, with your palm facing your body.
2. Place your right palm on your left palm and interlink the fingers of both hands. If this proves difficult, touch the fingertips of both hands to each other. Do not force your arms to bend - give yourself time to adjust to the action. Consciously relax your arms. Open your right armpit to create space between your chest and your upper right arm. Keep your right elbow pointed up and back, and your right forearm close to your head. Lower your left elbow further. Then place the back of your left wrist on your back. Hold the pose for 20-30 seconds. Repeat the pose on the other side.



UTTHITA TRIKONASANA

1. Spread a mat against a wall. Place a wooden block on its long side on the right edge of the mat. Stand in [Tadasana](#) on the centre of the mat. Inhale, then spread your feet about 1m (3.5 ft) apart. Your heels and buttocks should touch the wall. Raise your arms out to your sides until they are in line with your shoulders.
2. Now, turn the right foot out to the right until it is parallel to the wall. Turn your left foot in slightly to the right. Your left heel and buttocks should touch the wall. Keep your left leg straight. Stretch your arms away from your body, keeping them parallel to the floor, with your palms facing down.
3. Bend to the right and extend your right arm toward the floor. Place your right palm on the block. Pull the tailbone into your body, keeping your left buttock and shoulders firmly pressed to the wall. Raise the left arm up toward the ceiling. Turn your head and look at your left thumb. Rest your weight on both heels, and not on your right palm. Breathe evenly, not deeply. Hold the pose for 20-30 seconds. Repeat the pose on the other side.



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UTTHITA PARSVAKONASANA

1. Stand in **Tadasana** against a wall, with your heels and your buttocks touching it. Place the block on the floor behind your right foot. Inhale, and spread your feet 1m (3.5 ft) apart. Turn your right foot out to the right, until it is parallel to the wall.



2. Turn your left foot in slightly to the right. Press the outer edge of your left foot firmly on the floor, and bend the right knee, pushing your thigh down until your calf is at right angles to the floor. Stretch your left arm away from your left shoulder.



3. Bend to the right, and place your right palm on the block. Stretch the left arm up, with the palm facing forward. Now rotate the arm and bring it toward your left ear. Your left thumb should touch the wall. Turn your head and look at your left arm. Maintain a continuous stretch from the left ankle to the left wrist. Press your outer left foot into the floor. Move your shoulder blades into your body, and extend your spine toward your head. Hold the pose for 30 seconds. Repeat the pose on the other side.



ARDHA CHANDRASANA

1. Stand in **Tadasana**. Place a block on its short side against the wall. Inhale, spread your feet 1m (3.5 ft) apart. Raise your arms to shoulder-level.
2. Turn your right foot out to the right, parallel to the wall, and turn your left foot in, slightly to the right. Bend your right knee, and place the right palm on the block. Raise your left arm.
3. Straighten your right leg. Raise your left leg, until it is parallel to the floor. Keep your left arm stretched up, in line with the right arm. The back of your left hand should touch the wall.
4. Look up at your left thumb. Keep your weight on the right foot, thigh, and hip, not on your right palm. Hold the pose for 20 seconds. Repeat the pose on the other side.



PRASARITA PADOTTANASANA

1. Stand in [Tadasana](#). Place your hands on your hips, with your thumbs on your thumbs on your back and your fingers on the front of the hips. Inhale, and spread your feet 1.2m (4ft) apart. Your feet should be parallel to each other, the toes pointing forward. Press the outer edges of your feet to the floor. Keep your back erect.



2. Exhale, and lift both kneecaps. Bend forward, extending your spine, and bring your torso down toward the floor. Look up as you bend to ensure that your back is concave. Take both hands off your hips, and lower them to the floor. Place your palms flat on the floor with your fingers spread out.



3. Widen your elbows, keeping your palms flat on the floor. Place the crown of your head on the floor, between your palms. Push your sternum forward and draw the abdomen in. Move the thighbones and groin back to reduce the pressure on your head. Stay in the pose for 1 minute.



ARDHOMUKHA SVANASANA

1. Stand in [Tadasana](#) facing a wall, about 1 m (3.5 ft) away from it. Place 2 of the blocks on their broad sides, shoulder-width apart, against the wall. Place the third block on its long side, 45cm (18in) away from the wall. Separate your feet to a distance of 45 cm (18 in). Kneel, and place your palms on the two blocks against the wall.



2. Press your palms down on the blocks and walk your feet back, until they are 1.2 m(4ft) away from your hands. Make sure that your feet are inline with your hands and the same distance apart. Raise both heels. Stretch your legs, then lower your heels to the floor. Stretch your arms fully.



3. Consciously stretch stretch each leg from heel to buttock, and from the front of the ankle to the top of the thigh. Raise your buttocks, stretch your chest, and push your sternum toward your hands. Exhale, then rest your head on the third block. Press your hands down on the blocks, extending your arms fully. Stretch your spine and expand your chest. Keep your throat soft and elongated. Relax



your eyes and keep your brain passive.

Regular practice of these yogasanas will help to regain the balance of the chakra, located at the base of the spine. Other exercises you can include are: staff posture ([Dandasana](#)), bound angle ([Baddha Konasana](#)), crab, full wind relieving pose, pigeon and locust.

If depression is a strong contributing factor, back-bending poses will be beneficial for their energizing, toning and heart opening qualities. If anxiety is a primary contributing factor, forward bends can be utilized for their calming and nurturing aspects. [Pranayama](#) (yogic breathing exercises) are also helpful to calm the body and mind and to balance the energy in the body during the recovery stage of the disease. Nadi Sodhana Pranayama (alternate nostril breathing) is balancing, calming and reduces anxiety. Dirga Pranayama (three part breath) is calming, grounding and nurturing.



The practice of [meditation](#) is also very beneficial to cultivate a sense of control over life's events and to reduce obsessive thoughts. A general [meditation](#) practice will be beneficial, but using an active and targeted meditation would be more effective. Practice any or all of the following based upon what calls you to be invoked within yourself: Inner Peace Meditation, Third Eye Meditation, Root Chakra Meditation or Prana Healing Meditation.



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Related Links

- [Chakras : The Wheels of Spinning light](#)
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- [Top 10 To COMBAT EATING DISORDERS](#)
- [Top 10 Ways to Healthy Eating](#)
- [Yogic Diet](#)