



pranayama
energy control



by uncommonsensetherapy.com

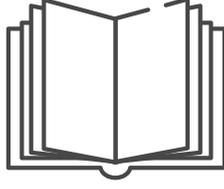


FOUNDATIONS

In India, hatha yoga is known as a pathway for physical and spiritual purification and detoxification of the mind and body. It is said that any practice of it increases peace of mind and general well-being. Pranayama is the fourth limb of hatha, following the yamas, niyamas and asana. Traditionally, they are practiced in this order to facilitate the path of enlightenment within the hatha lineage.

The ethical restraints of the yamas lead to a condition that benefits from moral discipline of the niyamas, which then benefits from the physical benefits of asana. As asana is advanced, the energetic benefits of pranayama help further purify the mind and the body by learning how to mindfully facilitate prana - life force energy - through your personal connection with your own breath.

Consistent practice of pranayama develops a deeper state of relaxation in the body that creates more benefits for your flexibility, strength, balance and general state of well-being. And using the bandhas - or energetic locks - in asana will further deepen all benefits in your practices.



SUTRAS

bahya abhyantara stambha vrittih desha kala
sankhyabhih paridrishtah dirgha sukshmah

2.50 || Pranayama has three aspects: external or outward flow / exhalation, internal or inward flow / inhalation, and the absence of both during the transition between / retention. These are regulated by place, time, and number, with breath becoming slow and subtle.

tatah kshiyate prakasha avaranam

2.52 || Through that pranayama the veil of karmasheya that covers the inner light is diminished and vanishes.

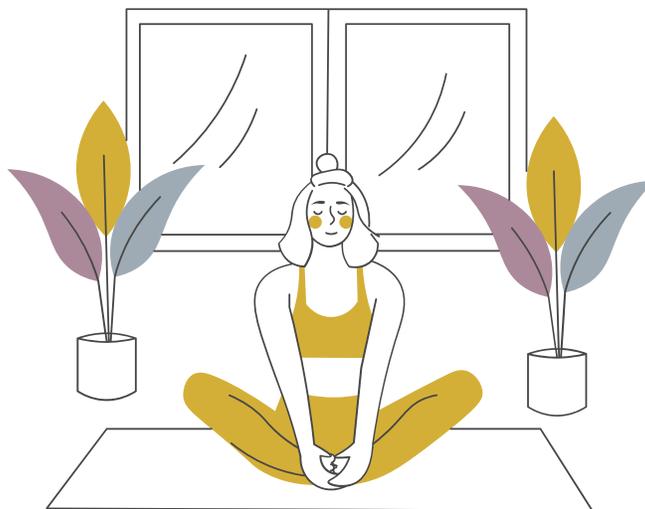
dharanasu cha योग्यता मानसह

2.53 || Through these practices and processes of pranayama, the mind acquires or develops the fitness, qualification, or capability for true concentration (dharana), which is itself the sixth of the steps.



HOW TO SIT

Most of the time pranayama is practiced seated, either in sukhasana (easy seat) or padmasana (lotus); however many beginner's breathing techniques are fine to practice lying down. Being after asana on the eight-limbed path, posture and alignment are an important part of pranayama practices. The body should be seated tall and open, with shoulders down the back and both sit bones grounded firmly to the ground below the buttocks.





SAHITA PRANAYAMA

benefits: increases oxygen supply to body, improves general health & wellbeing, reduces strain on the circulatory system, decreases bodily stress, improves lung function

The direct translation of sahita is “being in company with” and it's a beginner's breathing technique of simply sitting with the breath to start to monitor its fluctuations in & out.

Take a seat and start to actively breathe in and out, letting your mind naturally sync up with your breath. Also called “a moment of silence” breath, create moments of silence in between the inhale and exhale, the exhale and the inhale.

Start to really listen to the breath, making it quieter and gentler with every breath. Let the air lift your body up as you breathe in and your muscles relax as you breathe out. Increase the moments of silence as it feels natural.



BANDHAS

benefits: aligns and strengthens the spinal column, improves blood circulation, purifies and detoxifies the body, regulates energy levels and metabolism, increases sense of well-being

There are three major bandhas - or body locks - and two minor bandhas. The three major are called jalandhara (chin), muladhara (pelvic) and uddiyana (core) bandhas. Used together they are called maha bandha, or the great lock. The minor bandhas are pada (leg) and hasta (arm) and using all locks in practice realign the entire spinal column and support healthy energy flow.

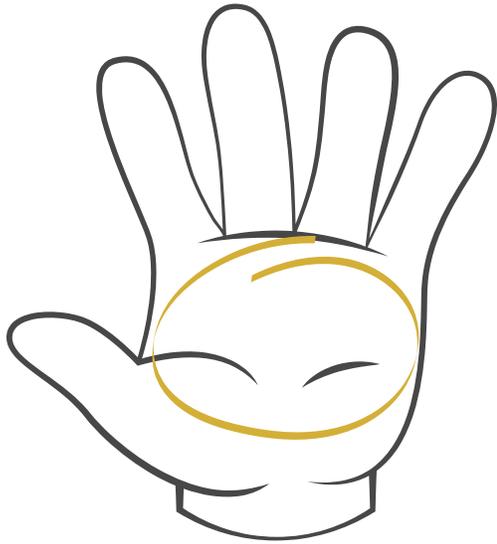
In pranayama, the locks are used to facilitate energy flow throughout the body, releasing blockages and tempering chaotic or lethargic energy back into balance. Bandhas should be primarily facilitated on exhale and retention.



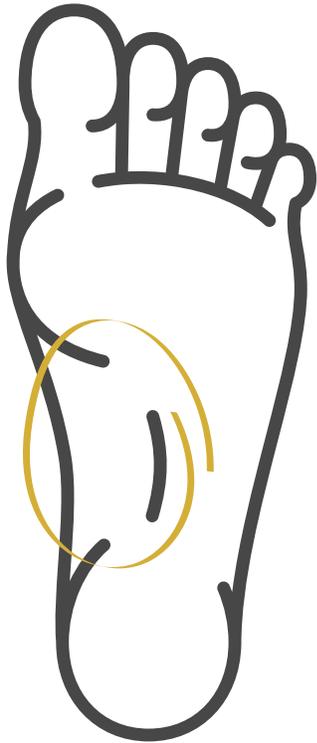
jalandhara lifts

uddiyana stabilizes

muladhara grounds



hasta lifts



pada grounds

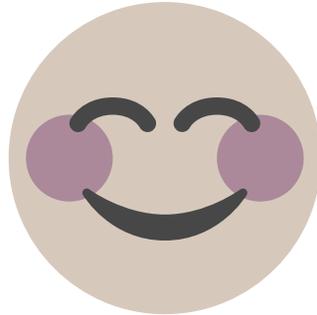


ADHAM PRANAYAMA

benefits: strengthens abdominal muscles, improves digestion, alleviates insomnia, improves oxygen supply, relaxes and detoxifies the body, increases immunity

Adham translates as “foundation” and it's a beginner's breathing technique of filling the belly with air in order to release unnecessary muscular tension in the body while breathing. Also called “abdominal breathing,” the focus is on fully releasing the abdominals as you inhale to engage them completely on exhale with uddiyana bandha.

From a comfortable seat, breathe in and fill the belly like its a balloon, releasing all abdominal engagement as you inhale. On exhale, engage the top, bottom and finally the center of the belly into the spine and up under the ribs. Continue to breathe like this as you incorporate the tips from sahita pranayama. All of this module's breathing techniques build on each other, so include all tips from previous techniques as you practice new ones.



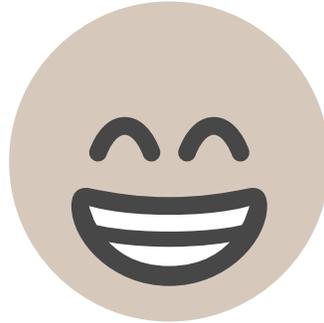
DIRGA PRANAYAMA

benefits: promotes effective breathing, supports mental and physical health, improves concentration while calming the nervous system, increases oxygen and bolsters lungs

Dirga translates as “unconquerable fort” and it's a beginner's breathing technique to access the full capacity of the lungs by breathing first into the belly and then allowing the air to rise through the ribs to fill the chest. Also called the “yogic breath” or “three part breath,” the focus is on full and complete breaths in and out of the body.

From a comfortable seat, breathe in, fill the belly like a balloon and then continue to breathe in so the breath rises up, expanding the ribs and the chest completely. As you exhale, engage bandhas to help release the breath: first lock the chin, then the pelvis and finally the belly.

Breath remains silent with gentle floating retention.



UJJAYI PRANAYAMA

benefits: promotes tranquility, soothes the nervous system and mind, slows down the heart rate and lowers blood pressure, increases telepathic sensitivity and intuition

Ujjayi translates as “victory breath” and it's a beginner's breathing technique to keep the breath slow, steady and full and the mind fully aware in the moment. Also called “ocean's breath,” its hallmark is the whispery sound that's made through the gentle constriction of throat muscles.

From a comfortable seat, breathe in and out like you're fogging up a mirror or glasses by gently constricting the throat and narrowing the passage of air into and out of the body. If this is difficult to do with the mouth closed, try it a few times with the mouth open to feel the adjustment of the throat muscles before closing the mouth.



PRANAYAMA EXTRAS

benefits: soothe the nervous system, balance the brain, release

There are several more pranayama practices that build on the energy control of these techniques. Kumbhaka (breath retention), bhramari (hissing breath), nadi shodhana and anuloma viloma (alternate nostril), surya and chandra bhedan (single nostril), bhasrika (bellowing), kapalabhati (detoxifying) and many more specialized techniques.

Within 300-hour and 500-hour trainings, these pranayamas are offered as intermediate & advanced. It's important to master the techniques offered here in order to receive full benefits of more advanced practices.
