

A Review Article on The Therapeutic Effects of Surya Namaskar in Improving Digestive Disorders

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Abstract

Introduction: Since ancient times, *Suryanamaskara* has been revered as a complete *yogic* discipline promoting health and vitality. *Ayurvedic* and modern perspectives highlight its therapeutic role in stimulating abdominal organs, improving digestion, enhancing metabolism, and addressing stress-induced digestive disturbances. **Methodology:** The review compiles references from classical *yogic* scriptures, *Ayurvedic* texts, and contemporary scientific literature. The practice was assessed for its postural sequence, synchronized breathing, and mindful engagement, focusing on their effects on gastrointestinal function, metabolic regulation, and overall digestive health.

Result and Conclusion: Evidence from traditional wisdom and modern studies suggests that *Suryanamaskara* improves appetite, aids digestion, relieves constipation, and supports the management of functional digestive disorders. Its multi-dimensional benefits extend to mental well-being, making it a safe, cost-effective, and sustainable approach for maintaining optimal digestive health.

Keywords

Suryanamaskar, *yoga* therapy, digestive health, gastrointestinal motility, stress reduction

Introduction

According to ancient *yogic* teachings, various parts of the body are governed by distinct divine impulses of light. *Surya Namaskar*, a series of postures, offers a complete exercise routine that taps into this concept. By performing the 12 poses in a set, practitioners effectively complete 28 asanas within just 12 to 15 minutes. This concentrated practice not only provides physical benefits but also aligns the body's energy with the divine light,

promoting overall health and balance. Repeating *Surya Namaskar* multiple times enhances its impact, allowing one to experience the transformative effects of yoga in a short amount of time.

Aim

To review the therapeutic potential of *Suryanamaskara* in the prevention and management of digestive disorders through the integration of classical yogic principles, *Ayurvedic* wisdom, and modern scientific evidence.

Objectives

- To explore the descriptions and significance of *Suryanamaskara* in classical *Yogic* and *Ayurvedic* literature.
- To highlight the physiological mechanisms by which *Suryanamaskara* influences digestive health.
- To assess its role in the prevention and management of common digestive disorders such as constipation, indigestion, and functional dyspepsia.

Methodology

This narrative review is based on data from classical *Yogic* scriptures, *Ayurvedic* literature, modern published research, and credible online sources relevant to *Suryanamaskara* and digestive health.

Classical references were taken from *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, *Gheranda Samhita*, and *Ayurvedic* texts emphasizing lifestyle and digestive health. Modern studies and interpretations, including indexed journal articles and authentic digital repositories, were reviewed to bridge ancient wisdom with contemporary understanding of digestive disorders. Translation and interpretation of Sanskrit verses, compilation of classical and modern evidence on physiological effects, thematic synthesis linking ancient practice to modern digestive health management was included.

Observation and results

Surya Namaskar has deep historical significance in ancient Indian traditions, particularly within the *Hatha Yoga* practice. Its origins trace back to the Vedic period, when the sun was revered as a powerful deity. The practice of *Surya Namaskar* was developed as a way to honor the sun's energy, symbolizing light, vitality, and life force. This sequence of postures

not only embodies physical exercise but also reflects the spiritual connection to the sun, reinforcing the importance of the sun's role in both life and wellness in ancient Indian culture.^[1]

Diseases of digestion example irritable bowel syndrome, constipation, acid reflux are frequent lifestyle factors which are a result of poor diet, stress, lack of exercise.

Yoga is an integrated technique. It comprises various types of practices. Physical, mental and spiritual. This can be practiced for handling such disorders. *Suryanamaskar* is one such yogic practice. This exercise comprises the *asanas* coupled with breathing regulation.

These practices are helpful in good digestion.

The 12 postures of Surya Namaskar

Pranamasana, Hastauttanasana, Hastapadasana, Ashwa Sanchalanasana, Dandasana, Ashtanga Namaskar, Bhujangasana, Adho Mukha Svanasana, Ashwa Sanchalanasana, Hastapadasana, Hastauttanasana, Tadasana.

Surya Namaskar typically begins with a prayer, expressing gratitude and reverence to the Sun as the ultimate source of energy and vitality. This prayer acknowledges the Sun's life-giving power, recognizing its role in sustaining all forms of life on Earth. By starting with this moment of reverence, practitioners connect spiritually to the Sun's energy, setting the tone for the practice that follows and aligning their mind, body, and spirit with the forces of nature.

The 12 mantras for the 12 sets, typically practiced, are as follows in their original Sanskrit form: ^[2]

1. ॐ मित्राय नमः (Om Mitrāya Namaḥ)
2. ॐ रवये नमः (Om Ravaye Namaḥ)
3. ॐ सूर्याय नमः (Om Sūryāya Namaḥ)
4. ॐ भानवे नमः (Om Bhānave Namaḥ)

5. ॐ खगाय नमः (Om Khagāya Namaḥ)
6. ॐ पूष्णे नमः (Om Pūṣṇe Namaḥ)
7. ॐ हिरण्यगर्भाय नमः (Om Hiraṇyagarbhāya Namaḥ)
8. ॐ मरीचये नमः (Om Marīcaye Namaḥ)
9. ॐ आदित्याय नमः (Om Ādityāya Namaḥ)
10. ॐ सावित्रे नमः (Om Sāvitre Namaḥ)
11. ॐ अर्काय नमः (Om Arkāya Namaḥ)
12. ॐ भास्कराय नमः (Om Bhāskarāya Namaḥ)

The 12 Classic poses of traditional Hatha Surya Namaskar				
	Asana	Mantra	Chakra	Breathing
	Step 1. Pranamasana Prayer pose	Om Mitrāya Namaha	Anahata	Exhale
	Step2. Hasta-uttanasana (Raised arms pose)	Om Ravaye Namaha	Vishuddhi	Inhale
	Step3. Hastapadasana (Standing forward bend)	Om Suryaya Namaha	Manipura	Exhale
	Step4. Ashwa Sanchalanasana (Equestrian pose)	Om Bhanave Namaha	Anahata	Inhale
	Step 5. Dandasana (Stick pose)	Om Khagaya	Sahasrara	Exhale
		Namaha		
	Step 6. Ashtanga Namaskara (Salute with eight parts or points)	Om Pushne Namaha	Whole body	Suspend
	Step 7. Bhujangasana (Cobra pose)	Om Hiranyagarb haya Namaha	Svadhishth ana	Inhale
	Step 8. Adho Mukha Svanasana (Downward facing dog pose)	Om Marichaye Namaha	Sahasrara	Exhale
	Step 9. Ashwa sanchalanasana (Equestrian pose)	Om Savitre Namaha	Anahata	Inhale
	Step10. Hastapadasana (Standing forward bend)	Om Aarkaya Namaha	Manipura	Exhale
	Step11. Hasta- uttanasana (Raised arms pose)	Om Adityaya Namaha	Vishuddhi	Inhale
	Step 12. Tadasana (Mountain Pose)	Om Bhaskaraya Namaha	Anahata	Exhale

Table 1.0 : The 12 classical poses of traditional Suryanamaskara

These are often used in practices like *Surya Namaskar* (Sun Salutations) to honor and invoke the sun's energy.

How to perform Surya Namaskar

To perfect it, begin in a quiet, clean space on a yoga mat wearing comfortable clothing. Warm up with light stretches and joint rotations. Perform each pose mindfully: start with *Pranamasana* (Prayer Pose), flow through poses like *Hastauttanasana* (Raised Arms Pose), *Padahasthasana* (Hand to Foot Pose), and *Bhujangasana* (Cobra Pose), and end in *Pranamasana*. Coordinate breath with movements, inhaling when expanding and exhaling when contracting. Practice daily, starting with 2-3 rounds, and cool down with relaxation poses like *Savasana*.

The optimal time to practice Sun Salutation is at sunrise, when the fresh morning energy enhances focus and vitality. It is essential to ensure your stomach and bowels are empty for a comfortable and effective practice.^[3]

Science behind Surya Namaskar

The vertebral column, often referred to as the backbone, forms the fundamental structure that allows humans to stand upright—a characteristic unique to us as "*Urdhwaretas*," meaning upward-moving beings. Unlike horizontal alignments observed in other species, our head, torso, and organs are vertically aligned. This alignment symbolizes the potential for upward energy movement within our bodies, but realizing this potential requires conscious effort, or *purushartha*.^[4]

The movements in *Surya Namaskar* (SN)—stretching, contracting, and bending—bring resilience to the ligaments and muscles attached to the bones. These dynamic actions activate bone marrow, rejuvenate tissues, and even influence cellular-level transformations, subtly impacting our DNA. This process resembles the softening and restructuring of a metal wire when repeatedly bent—a phenomenon rooted in science.

Additionally, the “baggage” of internal organs supported by the backbone experiences a gentle massage during the practice. This not only nurtures the internal body but also engages every external part, from head to toe. Chanting the names of *Surya* further enhances the practice, activating the vocal cords and syncing breath with movement—

inhale during stretches, exhale during bends. *Surya Namaskar* is a holistic practice that transforms not just the body but the mind as well.

- To evaluate its holistic benefits on metabolism, stress reduction, and gastrointestinal function.
- To discuss its cost-effectiveness, accessibility, and public health relevance as a preventive and therapeutic practice.

Discussion

The practice of *Surya Namaskar* offers multifaceted benefits that extend across physical, physiological, and psychological dimensions of health. Its dynamic sequence enhances flexibility by stretching and toning muscles, ligaments, and joints, thereby improving overall mobility and posture. The coordinated forward bends, backbends, and inversions promote blood circulation, support cardiovascular health, and ensure better oxygen delivery throughout the body. At the same time, the engagement of major muscle groups contributes to strengthening the body, building endurance, and improving balance. The integration of breath with movement not only optimizes respiratory efficiency and lung capacity but also induces a meditative state that calms the mind, reduces stress, and fosters mental clarity. Additionally, the rhythmic abdominal movements gently massage the internal organs, supporting digestion and relieving common gastrointestinal disturbances. Regular practice has also been associated with regulation of endocrine activity, which plays a significant role in maintaining hormonal balance and reproductive health. Beyond its physiological advantages, *Surya Namaskar* invigorates the body with renewed energy, aids in weight management through calorie burning and metabolic stimulation, and fosters mindfulness by strengthening the mind-body connection. Thus, *Surya Namaskar* emerges as a holistic practice that harmonizes physical vitality with psychological well-being, making it a powerful tool for maintaining overall health.

The stretching and twisting postures help to regulate the function of the intestines, supporting the elimination of toxins and waste from the body. Additionally, the rhythmic breathing associated with the practice enhances oxygenation and improves the flow of energy, which can help reduce bloating, constipation, and indigestion.^[5] *Suryanamaskara* also stimulates the parasympathetic nervous system, which promotes a calm, balanced state, reducing stress that can exacerbate digestive issues. Regular practice encourages better bowel movement regularity and can be particularly beneficial for individuals dealing

with acid reflux, IBS, or sluggish digestion.^[6] Beyond the physical benefits, the mindful nature of *Suryanamaskar* helps in managing emotional factors that influence digestion, such as anxiety or stress. *Suryanamaskar*, is highly effective in improving digestive disorders due to its holistic approach. This practice involves coordinated movements that stimulate the digestive system, promote better circulation, and alleviate stress, all of which are crucial for optimal digestive function. The forward bends in *Suryanamaskar* compress and massage the abdominal organs, promoting improved peristalsis and nutrient absorption.^[7] Thus, *Suryanamaskar* serves as a gentle yet powerful tool for supporting and improving overall digestive health.

CONCLUSION

Surya Namaskar holds significant therapeutic potential, particularly in addressing conditions like digestive disorders. Its holistic approach can promote overall well-being and help alleviate various health issues. However, to fully understand its effectiveness, more extensive research is needed, involving larger participant groups. Long-term studies and follow-up evaluations will be crucial to establishing the lasting benefits and potential of this practice. By expanding research efforts, we can gain a clearer understanding of how *Surya Namaskar* can be integrated into healthcare treatments and improve quality of life for individuals suffering from chronic conditions.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

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