

Importance of Surya Namaskar in daily life

Dr. Jyoti Gangwal^{*1} Dr. Sanjay Kholiya^{#2}

Assistant Professor^{*1} PG Scholar^{#2}

Dept. of Sharir Rachana^{*} Dept. of RSBK^{#2} Jayoti Vidyapeeth Women's University, Jaipur^{*1} National
institute of Ayurveda, Jaipur^{*2}

Corresponding Author- Dr. Jyoti Gangwal

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ABSTRACT-Ayurveda is the science of life. It plays an important role to prevent and treat the disease. Ayurveda specifically deals with mind body balance. The main part of it is Yoga and Asana. Yoga provides us a simple remedies, facile skills and procedure of good health. Asana gives physical and mental power and tone the body-mind for further exercise. Surya Namaskar is often referred to as the Sun Salutation. This Asana helps burn excess fat around the neck, chin, arms, shoulders, hips, abdomen, thighs, buttocks and the chest especially for women. Surya Namaskar improves the quality and circulation of blood in the body thus helping with detoxification.

Key words- Yoga, Asana, Surya Namaskar, Sun Salutation, detoxification.

	Chakra) , Sacral Chakra (Swadisthana Chakra) , Root Chakra (Muladhara Chakra).
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Scientific Reasons of Practicing Sun Salutation:-

Since time immemorial, Sun has been worshipped as God. Life begins with the Sun. It holds great significance religiously. Now, science has proved and recognized the healing powers of the Sun and the health benefits of sun salutation. The practice of Surya Namaskar in the direction of the sunrise helps maintain optimal Vitamin D in the body. The deficiency of Vitamin D causes a disease known as Rickets. Also, solar plexus located behind the navel in the human body is connected to the Sun. The practice of 12 postures of the sun salutation series enhances the solar plexus which, in turn, increases creative, intuitive, and leadership abilities in the practitioners.

Steps-

1. Pranamasana (Prayer Pose) (Salutation Pose): (It is a variation of Tadasana with namaste hands). Begin the sequence by joining the palms in namaste hands near your chest and have your feet placed together and stand close to the edge of the mat. Close your eyes and take a few breaths pulling in the abdominal muscles and expanding the chest while keeping the back straight. Calm the breathing if it is too fast or too short. This pose helps with calming the breath and relaxing the body.

I. INTRODUCTION-

Sanskrit name-	Surya Namaskar
Common / English name-	Sun Salutation
Type-	Stretch, Forward-Bend, Back-Bend, Stretch, Inversion, Strength
Position-	Standing
Dosha (Ayurveda)	Pitta , Kapha
Chakra-	Crown Chakra (Sahasrara Chakra) , Solar Plexus (Manipura



Fig no. 1) Pranamasana



Fig no. 2) Hasta Uttanasana

Beginner tip: If closing the eyes brings giddiness or feels uncomfortable, then keep the eyes open and focus on any one point while continuing breathing.

2. Hasta Uttanasana (Raised Arm Backbend Pose): (It is a variation of Standing Backbend with raised arms and namaste hands). Inhale and stretch both the arms above the head holding the palms in a namaste. Curve the head, chest and shoulders towards the back in the form of an arch. Feel the stretch at the chest, upper abdominal muscles and the middle back. The energy is carried upward through inhalation to the upper part of the body with the back bend. Make sure the feet are firm on the floor and as you take the upper body backwards, breathe deeply and feel the chest expanding.

Beginner tip: If throwing the head back leads to giddiness or breathing gets difficult, then one can

just raise the arms up and behind the body without moving the shoulders and the chest beyond their comfort zone. One can also bring two toe distance between the feet to avoid losing balance.

Hasta Uttanasana meaning: ‘Uttana’ means intense stretch and ‘Hasta’ means hands. Thus with the arms stretched, the shoulder muscles and the neck muscles are opened up giving strength to the arms and chest to go into the deeper postures of Surya Namaskar.

3. Uttanasana (Hasta Padasana) (Hand to foot Posture): As you exhale bring the entire body from Hasta Uttanasana to Uttanasana (Hasta Padasana) by bending at the hip and stretching forward to reach for the feet with your palms. Exhale completely and place the palms on the mat close to either side of your feet and reach for the knees with your forehead. If this is difficult, one could bend the knees a bit or take the body forward as per the comfort level.



Fig no. 3 (A,B) Uttanasana or hasta padasana

Remember to breathe as this will help in moving the body forward easily. This wonderful stretch brings a great beginning to the opening of the lower back, opening of the calves and the hamstrings. This yoga pose massages the abdominal organs and hence the power of digestion increases, and menstrual disorders or irregularities are relieved. There is fresh blood flow to the brain and the spine. A complete exhalation throws out the toxins in the body. Continue breathing while feeling the spine expand with inhalation and exhalation.

4. **Ashwa Sanchalanasana (Equestrian Pose):** Inhale, bend the right knee, extend the left leg back and drop the left knee on the ground while continuing to place the palms on the floor close to the right foot. Push the spine downwards, feeling the stretch in the inner right thighs and press the pelvic deep towards the floor raising the chest, head and the shoulders backwards. Gazing towards the sky, exhale completely and begin slow breathing taking the energy upwards to the head. If placing the palms on the floor completely is difficult, bring the tips of the fingers on the floor, but make sure the posture is correct.



Fig. no. 4) Ashwa Sanchalanasana



Fig.no. 5) Phalakasana

Feel the stretch at the lower back, the inner thighs, the shoulders and the chest. This yoga pose also works as a great eye exercise if the gaze is towards the roof or the sky. Pressing of the abdominal muscles and pulling in the abdominal muscles will help in toning and reducing the excess fat around the abdomen and also strengthen the abdominal muscles. As this pose distributes the weight of the body evenly, it gives an overall toning of the body making it look fresh and beautiful.

5. **Plank Pose (Phalakasana) (Stick pose):** Inhale and as you lift the body a bit, place the right foot close to the left foot behind you. As you exhale, raise the chest, shoulders and the spine by extending the arms and elbows and continue placing the palms on the floor where they were placed earlier at the second step. This pose will have the entire body balancing on the toes and on the palms bringing all the energy to the shoulders and arms. Looking up, extend the stretch of the neck and the entire body is making sure the abdominal muscles are

tightened. Build endurance here and hold the pose with smooth breathing while feeling the spine move with every breath. If this pose is difficult, one can go a bit lower with the knees for a half plank pose or bend the forearms to give the shoulders a better support. This posture brings great strength to the chest, shoulders and the arms if the alignment is kept in mind. The abdominal muscles too should be kept in mind while in this pose.

6. **Ashtanga Namaskara (Salutation with eight limbs):** Inhale and as you exhale bring both the knees to the mat and slide the body down bringing only the chest and the chin to the floor with the face straight. Make sure the lower back (buttocks) is raised up and balance the body on the toes and bend elbows. After complete exhalation in this pose, begin the normal breathing and remain focused with the attention to the core. The eight limbs, the toes of both the feet, both the knees, chest, both the palms and the chin are placed on the floor/mat

without putting all the body weight on them. The body weight should be evenly distributed and using the back and abdominal muscles strength, this pose can be done smoothly. This yoga pose helps in relieving tensions around

the back and spinal nerves. The expansion of the chest and the abdominal area gives room for curing ailments like asthma, constipation and indigestion. It also works to reduce the excess fat at the buttocks when tightened.



Fig no. 6) Ashtanga Namaskara



Fig. no. 7) Bhujangasana

7. **Cobra Pose (Bhujangasana):** On inhalation, lower the hips while pushing the chest forward and upward with the hands pushing the palms deeper into the mat and bring the spine fully arched and look up taking the head back. Exhale completely in this Cobra Pose and fix the gaze upwards which is also a good eye exercise. The knee and the thighs can remain close to the floor or for a deeper stretch take it a bit above the floor. Taking the focus to the lower back and spine, feel the tensions as you pull the spine forward with every exhalation. If one finds it difficult to hold in this pose, you could bend the elbows a bit, not putting too much weight on the shoulders and the arms. This pose gives dynamic expansion to the organs of the chest and abdomen. The spine here is expanded beautifully removing blockages and thus helping a good flow of energy to all parts of the body from the spine.

8. **Adho Mukha Svanasana or Parvatasana (Mountainpose) (Downward Facing Dog Pose):** As you exhale, bring the entire body up placing the feet on the floor and the palms on the floor. Raise the entire spine and back taking it deep upwards and bring the chest and the head deep inwards and aim for the mat/floor with the head. Complete exhalation here and begin the deep breathing by pushing the head deeper inside and the lower back deeper upwards. If placing the feet on the floor completely is difficult one could balance on the toes, but with practice, work on placing the feet firm on the floor. Feel the stretch at the lower back, the entire leg and the arms and take the focus more to the core and tuck-in the tummy. This pose tones the spine, relieves varicose veins and eases the shoulder stiffness. This is also considered a great posture for athletes to give better strength to the hamstrings.



Fig no. 8) Adho Mukha Svanasana



fig no.9) Ashwa Sanchalanasana

9. Ashwa Sanchalanasana (Equestrian Pose): Inhale and raise the body bringing the right foot close to the palms bending the right knee and place the left knee on the floor behind you giving the hip a push downwards. Exhale completely and push the right hip down bending the right knee forward. Take the chest and shoulders up and gaze upwards.

In this position, make a gentle effort to push the hips down towards the floor, to deepen the stretch.

10. Uttanasana (Hasta Padasana) (Hand to foot Posture): Inhale and stretching the right leg completely bring the left foot close to the right foot and place the head close to the knees bending the upper body at the hip. This pose will be far easier to do now than at the beginning as the muscles have opened up with the various other yoga poses. Hence one can go deeper by touching the entire chest and the face close to the thighs and the knees. Exhale completely in this pose and watch the breath as the spine expands.



Fig no. 10 (A,B) Uttanasana or hasta padasana

11. Hasta Uttanasana (Raised Arm Backbend Pose): Inhale deeply, look up first and then extend the arms in front of you keeping the palms in Namaste and raise the head and the upper body upwards taking the stretch backwards with the arms in Namaste and exhale completely in this pose. This stretch should take you deeper backwards as the spine, by now, would have expanded enough. Breathe taking the energy upwards to the throat as this pose works wonders for the thyroid glands. With inhalation, expand the stretch.

12. Pranamasana (Salutation Pose): As you exhale, release the stretch and bring the body in Mountain Pose and completely exhaling with the palms in Namaste position close to the chest. Calm your breath and close your eyes. Give the body two breaths to relax and start the sequence again going into the 11 postures with proper breathing and taking the energy at each pose to a different level.



Fig no. 11) Hasta Uttanasana Fig no. 12) Pranamasana

The practice of this sequence could be done in 12 rounds (6 times for each leg) at the beginning of the yoga session as this opens the muscles and brings enough warmth to the body to go further with the other Asanas. One must bring the body to relax before starting with the other yoga poses after completing Surya Namaskar. If one wants to do these poses more for cardio, then doing 24 rounds would help in toning the body along with strengthening the cardiac muscles.

Sun Salutation Modifications-

Most of the above Asanas that are part of the sequence of Sun Salutation (Surya Namaskar) can be performed even if the practitioner is new or has certain discomfort in a specific pose. These postures can be altered based on each individual's capacity and comfort level:

- **In Hasta Uttanasana, one need not arch the back much.** Just raising and stretching the arms should be good enough to get the stretch.
- **In Pada Hastasana (Uttanasana), bending knees will help avoid too much pressure on the lower back.** It will also give the flexibility to extend the arms to touch the floor. If the neck hurts when trying to take the head towards the knee, then just relax the neck and look in front and don't push the head towards your knees.
- **In Ashwa Sanchalanasana, if the chest does not open, remain close to the ground with the palms on the floor.** With slow repeated practice, the chest will open up and it will be easy to expand it backwards. If the knees feel uncomfortable, place a blanket underneath the knees or you could also reduce the distance the back leg is stretched or the front leg is bent.

- **Parvatasana or Adho Mukha Svanasana** is a difficult pose for beginners. Here one could bend the knees or even reduce the distance between the feet and the arms. If placing the head deep is uncomfortable, then you could look up. In some cases of Migraine, looking down may be very uncomfortable. In such a case, simply look up. If the arms feel weak, use a blanket below the palms to give support to arms and shoulders.
- **AshtangaNamaskaraor Ashtangasana (Salutation with Eight Limbs or Eight Limbed Pose)** is most certainly easy to do after going flat on the floor and then raising the lower back and thighs off the floor. Some yoga students may find going into this yoga pose directly a bit difficult as a lot of pressure is put on the shoulders and arms. So one could practice by first going down flat on the tummy and then with inhalation rising up on the eight limbs.
- **Cobra Pose or Bhujangasana** requires chest and abdominal strength to bring the body in this yoga pose from Ashtangasana (Eight Limbed Pose). Here one could bend the elbow initially until one gets comfortable with the pose. You could place a blanket below the thighs to give support to the back to stay in the pose. To avoid more strain to the back, one can give a slight arch to the back and avoid going deep with the back bend.

Sun Salutation yoga sequences-

- Core And Abs Yoga Sequence Intermediate
- Heart Opening Yoga Sequence With Backbends
- Peak Pose Yoga Sequence Urdhva Dhanurasana Sirsasana

- Seasonal Yoga New Year Yoga Sequence
- Peak Pose Archer Pose Yoga Sequence
- Warrior Pose Yoga Sequence For Better Balance
- Daily Yoga Sequence For All Levels
- Yoga For Psoas
- Yoga Sequence For Teens Introduction
- Beginner Yoga Sequence Peak Pose Yoga Sequence
- Standing Yoga Sequence
- Yoga For Women Yoga Sequence For Menstruation
- Peak Pose Yoga Sequence Tree Pose Vrksasana
- Vinyasa Yoga Sequence Earth And Space Element Yoga Poses
- Peak Pose Yoga Sequence Parivrtta Ardha Chandrasana
- Yoga Sequence For Anxiety

Anatomy

Sun Salutation benefits the following muscles and hence can be included in yoga sequences with the corresponding muscle(s) focus:

- Lower Back
- Biceps and Triceps
- Core (Abs)
- Feet and Ankles
- Hamstrings
- Chest
- Hips
- Knees
- Neck

Physical Benefits (Anatomical)

- **Strengthens Muscles:** All the postures are arranged in such a way that the various muscles of the body are expanded and contracted thus strengthening them with practice. Upper body muscles: arms, neck and shoulders and Lower body muscles: lower back, abdomen, thighs, hamstring and calves are all strengthened.
- **Helps women with weight loss:** Especially for women, helps burn excess fat around the neck, chin, arms, shoulders, hips, abdomen, thighs, buttocks and the chest.
- **Removes toxins:** Improves the quality and circulation of blood in the body thus helping with detoxification.
- **Tones muscles:** A great way to tone the body and improve the posture if one is having a hunched back.

- **Lengthens spine:** Improves and lengthens the spine thus giving a gain in height if the postures are performed correctly.
- **Increases Immunity:** Improves the immune system (due to unique combination of blood circulation and rhythmic breathing) in the body and brings about a change in the health conditions like simple body aches, irritability, headaches, stiffness and digestion problems.
- **Brings feel good emotions:** Changes physical appearance of the body bringing a toned look and a glowing face with less wrinkles around the eyes and on the forehead.
- **Anti-anxiety and Calming Properties:** -Surya Namaskar helps to improve memory and the nervous system. Moreover, it stabilizes the activity of the endocrine and thyroid glands, thereby reducing anxiety and inducing the sensation of complete calmness and tranquility.
- **Healthy Lower Body:** The first and last pose of Surya Namaskar, the Pranamasana (prayer pose) works on the lower body. It effectively strengthens the legs, ankles, and feet. The pose firms the hips, relieves sciatica, and reduces flat feet. In Pranamasana, the hands are folded in Namaste position close to the heart. Scientifically, the folding of hands together connects the right and left hemisphere of the brain.
- **Enhances Fitness and Flexibility:** The Surya Namaskar is a comprehensive workout that benefits the entire body. The diverse 12 postures stretch, strengthen, and boost fitness levels of the body. The Ashtanga Namaskar works on the joints of wrists, the forward fold extends the limbs and makes the spine supple, and so much more.
- **Prepares body for tougher yoga poses:** Acts as a great stretch for the entire body and the warming up of muscles helps in practicing the tougher Asanas. It is good to start the yoga session with the practice of Sun Salutation (Surya Namaskar).

Health Benefits

- **Activates Digestive System:** As Sun Salutation strengthens the abdominal muscles, the abdominal organs are toned. As a result, digestion improves and one can get rid of constipation and dyspepsia with regular practice.
- **Improves Pulmonary function:** The chest and lungs are expanded thus bringing in oxygen due to deep inhalation.

- **Improves functioning of vital glands:** Since the poses give room for flexion and extensions, all the vital glands in the body begin to improve like the Thyroid, Pituitary, Sweat glands, Esophageal, Mammary, Prostate, and Uterine.
- **Improves menstruation:** Works on the reproductive organs and brings in a smooth and balanced menstrual cycle.
- **Improves Blood Circulation of the Body:** Due to the active process of inhalation and exhalation, the lungs are constantly ventilated and the blood remains oxygenated. It's a great way of detoxing your body and helping it get rid of excess carbon dioxide and other toxic gases.
- **Activates the Heart Chakra:** In the prayer pose, the hands are joined together in front of the heart center. According to Yogic traditions, this Mudra activates the heart chakra and encourages the lotus heart to open up with awareness.
- **Remedy for Blood Pressure and Heart Problems:** Surya Namaskar is a natural remedy for blood pressure. The Surya Namaskar benefits the heart muscles and corrects irregular heartbeats. The practice also keeps sugar levels in control thus keeping the heart problems at bay.
- **Happy Gut:** Due to the alternate stretching and compression of the abdominal organs in the Sun Salutation Series, the digestive fire gets activated that helps get rid of constipation and other stomach problems. A happy and healthy gut is one of the most regarded health benefits of Surya Namaskar.
- **Helps Maintain High Spirits:** With the practice of Surya Namaskar enhance the health of your body, mind, and soul. It is one of the best ways to keep the body free from diseases and to lead a life of youthfulness, vigor, and positivity.
- **Benefits your Skin and Hair:** By incorporating it in your routine it will keep you youthful and healthy even in old age. It improves your blood circulation that aids in bringing back the glow on your face; preventing the onset of wrinkles, making your skin look ageless and radiant. It also prevents hair loss and the ageing of hair.

Therapeutic Benefits

Controls Diabetes, improves any irregularity of the reproductive organs in women, helps with Insomnia, and controls Anxiety spells.

Surya Namaskar is much more than just an exercise, and its practice comes with great results. It is also an important tool that empowers human beings to break free from the compulsive cycles and patterns of their lives.

Sun Salutation Contraindications-

As the Surya Namaskar (Sun Salutation) is a 12 poses sequence done with the flow of energy with proper breathing, it requires a certain physical strength for beginners. Hence this sequence does have its limitations and should not be performed if one is suffering from certain ailments. The muscles in this yoga pose are put to work continuously, so it is better done with good guidance at the time of learning. Below are some of the contraindications of this sequence.

- **Bodily Weakness:** Since this is an involved yoga sequence, care should be taken if one has general body weakness or muscle and bone weakness.
- **Bad Back:** In Sun Salutation (Surya Namaskar), the spine expands and contracts putting pressure on the lower back and hip. Hence someone with a very bad back or injured back should certainly avoid this even if one has practiced this for years. It is essential to take a yoga teacher's guidance or start slowly once the yoga practitioner has recovered from the back ailment or injury.
- **Pregnant Women:** Not advisable to be done by pregnant women as this puts pressure on the back and the abdominal area.
- **High Blood Pressure:** People suffering with high blood pressure should avoid this sequence. But with proper guidance from a yoga teacher and for someone not elderly can begin this yoga pose slowly and carefully.
- **Heart Problem:** Someone with heart problem is advised to consult a physician before practicing Sun Salutation (Surya Namaskar). Remember that the age factor does play a big role for someone with heart conditions.
- **Arthritis:** Knee strength plays an important role with the various postures in Surya Namaskar. So someone who has severe arthritis leading to knee stiffness, should take it slow or avoid this sequence.
- **Wrist Injury:** Injury at the wrist will make the sequence difficult as pressure on the wrists in poses like Cobra Pose, Adho Mukha Svanasana and going down to Eight Limb Pose would cause more stress and injury to the wrists.

Sun Salutation Variations

- Half Sun Salutation (Ardha Surya Namaskar)
- Seated Sun Salutation (Upavistha Surya Namaskar)
- Sun Salutation Variation Sitting On Chair (Surya Namaskar Variation Sitting On Chair)
- Sun Salutation Variation Standing In Front Of Chair (Surya Namaskar Variation Standing In Front Of Chair)
- Sun Salutation Variation Forward Fold Surya Namaskar Variation Uttanasana
- Kneeling Sun Salutation Sequence Kneeling Surya Namaskar Vinyasa

Sun Salutation Yoga Sequence Preparatory Poses

As Sun Salutation (Surya Namaskar) by itself is a sequence structured with step by step flow of the body and breath, it is used as a preparatory pose for most yoga poses (Asanas). Hence one can work on simple stretches before the practice of Surya Namaskar, like neck stretches, back stretches, shoulder stretches, and leg stretches. One could also prepare the body by doing few rounds of deep breathing that will help in opening the nostrils (which is required for better flow of energy during Sun Salutation).

Sun Salutation Yoga Sequence Relaxing Follow-up Poses

After the practice of Sun Salutation (Surya Namaskar), it is important to relax and cool the muscles. Therefore the practice should end with either Savasana (Corpse Pose) or Advasana (Reverse Corpse Pose). Any of these two yoga poses (supine and prone respectively) will help in relaxing the spine and all the muscles of the body. Bring the focus on breath and "feel" the spine move with focus on the lower back.

Sun Salutation Yoga Sequence Level Up Follow-up Poses

For better strength and flexibility one can move to the advance level of Sun Salutation (Surya Namaskar) by practicing Sun Salutation B (Surya Namaskar B), where the 17 steps will bring stability, endurance, strength and stamina. One could also take the practice to another level by reciting the mantra at each pose which will create a good flow of "pranic" energy in the body which works more towards the spiritual benefits. The other possible enhancing of the level is to do it 108 times for greater endurance and stamina.

Sun Salutation Breath Awareness

When the body moves in a flow like in Surya Namaskar (Sun Salutation), the coordination of the breathing process plays an important role to ensure for easy movements as well as proper use of the lungs and chest to encourage deep breathing. Given below is the detailed breathing information for each step forming part of the short mini sequence, Sun Salutation:

1. **Inhale** at Hasta Uttanasana (Raised Arms Pose).
2. **Exhale** at Uttanasana (Standing Forward Fold Pose).
3. **Inhale** at Ashwa Sanchalanasana (Crescent Low Lunge Pose), with the right foot forward.
4. **Exhale** at Phalakasana (Plank Pose).
5. **Inhale/Exhale** at Ashtangasana (Eight Limbed Pose).
6. **Inhale** at Urdhva Mukha Svanasana (Upward Facing Dog Pose).
7. **Exhale** at Adho Mukha Svanasana (Downward Facing Dog Pose).
8. **Inhale** at Ashwa Sanchalanasana (Crescent Low Lunge Pose), with the left foot forward.
9. **Exhale** at Uttanasana (Standing Forward Fold Pose).
10. **Inhale** at Pranamasana (Prayer Pose).
11. **Exhale** to relax.

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