

# Comprehensive Review of Yoga's Impact on Balance and Motor Function in Parkinson's Disease

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## DESCRIPTION

Parkinson's Disease (PD) is a progressive neurodegenerative disorder characterized by motor symptoms such as tremors, rigidity, bradykinesia (slowness of movement), and postural instability. These symptoms often lead to impaired balance, increased risk of falls, and reduced quality of life. While pharmacological treatments can help manage symptoms, they do not halt disease progression or fully restore motor function. In recent years, complementary therapies including physical exercise and mind-body interventions have gained attention for their potential to improve motor control and balance in individuals with Parkinson's disease. Among these, yoga has emerged as a promising approach that integrates physical movement, breath control, and mindfulness to enhance physical and psychological well-being.

Yoga offers a unique combination of stretching, strengthening, and balance-enhancing postures that can address many of the motor impairments associated with Parkinson's disease. Unlike traditional exercise, yoga emphasizes mindful movement and body awareness, which can help individuals better control their posture and coordination. The gentle, low-impact nature of yoga also makes it accessible to people with varying degrees of mobility and physical capacity, including older adults and those with chronic neurological conditions.

Several clinical studies have explored the effects of yoga on balance and motor function in Parkinson's disease patients. A growing body of evidence from randomized controlled trials suggests that yoga interventions can significantly improve balance, gait, flexibility, and muscle strength in this population. For instance, participants engaging in yoga programs ranging from six to twelve weeks have shown enhanced static and dynamic balance, as measured by clinical tools such as the Berg Balance Scale and Timed Up and Go test. These improvements are clinically important because better balance reduces fall risk—a major concern for individuals with Parkinson's disease.

In addition to physical benefits, yoga practice has been linked to improved motor function and reduced rigidity. Postures that encourage slow, controlled movement may help counteract

bradykinesia and improve joint mobility. Breath regulation and relaxation techniques incorporated into yoga may also decrease muscle stiffness and enhance motor coordination. Furthermore, the mindful attention cultivated during yoga can improve body awareness and proprioception, enabling individuals to better sense their position in space and make necessary postural adjustments.

Beyond motor outcomes, yoga also positively impacts psychological well-being, which is closely connected to physical health in Parkinson's disease. Depression, anxiety, and stress are common non-motor symptoms in PD that can exacerbate motor difficulties and reduce motivation for physical activity. Yoga's holistic approach—combining meditation, breathwork, and physical movement—has demonstrated effectiveness in alleviating these psychological symptoms. By reducing stress and promoting relaxation, yoga may indirectly support improved motor function and balance.

Despite promising results, challenges remain in standardizing yoga protocols for Parkinson's disease. The wide variety of yoga styles, session durations, and instructor qualifications creates variability in intervention outcomes. Most studies to date have small sample sizes and limited follow-up, making it difficult to determine the long-term benefits of yoga on disease progression. Additionally, not all patients may be suitable for every type of yoga practice, and modifications may be necessary to accommodate individual physical limitations and safety concerns.

Nonetheless, the safety profile of yoga in PD is favorable, with few adverse events reported. The adaptability of yoga postures allows therapists and instructors to tailor sessions to individual needs, ensuring both safety and effectiveness. Moreover, yoga can be practiced in group settings, fostering social interaction and community support, which are important for holistic health.

Incorporating yoga into comprehensive Parkinson's disease management plans holds significant potential. As an adjunct to medication and physical therapy, yoga may enhance motor control, improve balance, and reduce fall risk while simultaneously addressing psychological well-being.

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Encouragingly, several rehabilitation centers and Parkinson's support groups have begun offering yoga classes specifically designed for PD patients, reflecting growing acceptance of this approach.

## CONCLUSION

Yoga represents a promising complementary therapy for individuals with Parkinson's disease seeking to improve balance

and motor function. Supported by emerging clinical evidence, yoga's mindful and gentle movement practices can address both the physical and emotional challenges of Parkinson's disease. As research continues to advance, future large-scale, well-designed studies will help define best practices for integrating yoga into standard Parkinson's care, ultimately improving quality of life and functional independence for those affected by this chronic condition.