

## Effect of Yoga Nidra on Women's Health: A Narrative Review


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Women's health is influenced by various physiological, psychological factors and hormonal changes across different life stages including menstruation, pregnancy, menopause, and mental well-being. This review intends to narrate the present evidence of Yoga Nidra on women's health. A literature review was performed using the keywords "Yoga Nidra and Women's health" in PubMed, PubMed Central, Google Scholar, and Cochrane Library from inception to 2024. A total of 3790 were retrieved, and out of that 10 studies were selected for evaluation after inclusion and exclusion criteria. The review comprised experimental publications, case studies, and case series in English describing the effect of Yoga Nidra. The overwhelming body of research indicates that Yoga Nidra treatments have positive impacts in both physiological and therapeutic settings. Findings from the studies conclude that Yoga Nidra improves neurocognitive, mood, and sleep, and decreases anxiety and depression related to pregnancy, cervical cancer, and menstrual abnormalities in patients. They were also proven to help treat several clinical problems like obesity, menopausal symptoms, and mental health conditions like stress. In general, Yoga Nidra can be practiced safely if it is done under the supervision of a qualified teacher. Further large-scale studies with rigorous designs are required to fully understand the mechanisms underlying Yoga Nidra.

**Keywords:** Women's Health, Yoga Nidra, Yogic Sleep, Menstrual Health, Menopause, Pregnancy, Hormonal Balance, Mind-Body Intervention

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## Introduction

*Yoga Nidra*, also known as 'Yogic sleep', 'psychic sleep', or 'sleeping consciously', is a meditative procedure whose goal is to transform the mind and body. The name '*Yoga Nidra*' derives from two Sanskrit words: '*Yoga*,' which means union, and '*Nidra*,' which means sleep. It is a simplified form of an ancient tantric relaxation technique.[1] *Yoga Nidra* is derived from '*Pratyahara*,' one of the eight *Ashtanga* (eight-limbed) branches of the *Yoga* system as conceptualized in *Patanjali's* well-known codification method of *Yogic* practice and tantric ritual of '*Nyasa*', the meaning of '*Nyasa*' is 'to place or to take the mind to that point'. *Yoga Nidra* is neither *Nyasa* nor meditation as *Nyasa* and meditation both is done in a sitting position while keeping your spine straight, *Yoga Nidra* is performed in a supine position and is classified as a sleep state in which awareness is preserved. In *Yoga Nidra*, there is profound relaxation, stress reduction, initiating healing processes, and personal transformation. [2] *Yoga Nidra* bears some resemblance to sleep in as much as in both states there is a disconnection from the arousal-promoting effects of the environment, a decrease in sympathetic nervous system (SNS) activity (i.e., a reduction in stress responses), and a manifestation of 'dream-like' visual experiences.[3] *Yoga Nidra* systematically induces complete physical, mental, and emotional relaxation.[4] The transitions in women often bring challenges such as menstrual disorders, pregnancy-related stress, sleep disturbances, and menopausal symptoms. Women's health can be described as the illnesses and conditions that are unique to women, those that disproportionately impact women compared to men, or ailments that significantly affect a large number of women, as well as those that have distinct implications for women relative to men.[5] Women experience climacteric for nearly one-third of their lives. Post-menopausal women often encounter age-related physiological changes, which commonly lead to mood disturbances and a decline in overall well-being.[6] Menstrual disorders are prevalent among women and can lead to both physical and psychological challenges. Around 19% of women aged 18 to 55 report experiencing menstrual-related issues throughout their reproductive years.[7] Cervical cancer is a significant public health concern in developing nations, particularly in India,

Which accounts for nearly one-third of the global cases and has the highest incidence rate.[8] Psychosocial anxiety during pregnancy arises when an expectant mother struggles to manage demands, leading to both behavioural and physical manifestations of stress. Around 10–15% of pregnant women experience emotional fluctuations that heighten the risk of mental health issues, potentially impacting both the mother and the developing fetus.[9] As mind-body interactions gain recognition, *Yoga Nidra*, a guided relaxation technique has emerged as a potential tool for improving women's health by promoting deep rest, emotional regulation, and hormonal balance.

### Procedure of *Yoga Nidra*

**Preparation:** Prepare for *Yoga Nidra* by lying on your back in *Shavasana*. Position your body straight from head to toe, with your legs slightly apart and your arms a little away from your torso. Turn your palms upward. Close your eyes and keep them closed until instructed otherwise. Avoid any physical movement during the practice. Take deep breaths, and as you exhale, let go of the cares and worries of the day. This practice will help you cultivate a sense of deep relaxation. Throughout *Yoga Nidra*, remain alert to the instructor's voice, functioning on the levels of hearing and awareness.

**Relaxation:** Begin by bringing a sense of inner relaxation to your entire body. Focus on your body and acknowledge the importance of complete stillness. Develop an awareness of your body from the top of your head to the tips of your toes. Mentally repeat the mantra **O--o--o--m--m--m**, allowing yourself to experience absolute stillness and heightened awareness of your body. Repeat the mantra again.

**Resolve:** Now, resolve. This should be a simple, positive statement, expressed in straightforward language. Repeat your resolve three times with full awareness, emotion, and intention. The resolve you make during *Yoga Nidra* holds the power to manifest in your life.

**Rotation of Consciousness:** Shift your awareness through different parts of your body in a systematic rotation of consciousness. Quickly move your attention from one part to the next, mentally naming each and simultaneously becoming aware of it. Focus on the right side, the left side, the back, the front, and the major areas of the body.

**Breathing:** Turn your attention to your breath. Notice the flow of air moving in and out of your lungs. Count your breaths backward, starting from 27, while maintaining awareness of the navel, chest, throat, and nostrils.

**Visualization:** Stop counting your breaths and shift to visualization. Various images will be named; allow yourself to visualize each as vividly as possible. Engage your feelings, awareness, emotions, and imagination in the process.

**Resolve:** Return to your resolve. Repeat the same resolve you made at the beginning of the practice. State it three times with complete awareness, emotion, and intention.

**Finish:** Release all effort and draw your attention outward. Become aware of your natural breath, your whole body, and your state of relaxation. Feel your body resting peacefully on the floor, breathing quietly and slowly. Develop awareness of your body from head to toe and mentally repeat the mantra **O--o--o--m--m--m**. Take your time and move slowly as you begin to reawaken your body. When you feel fully alert, sit up gently and open your eyes. The practice of Yoga Nidra is now complete. It is practiced for 35 minutes.[2]

## Aims and Objectives

### Aims

This narrative review aims to explore the role of Yoga Nidra in women's health, and well-being highlighting its physiological and psychological benefits.

### Objectives

To examine the impact of Yoga Nidra

1. On menstrual health,
2. Pregnancy-related stress and mental health,
3. Menopause and post-menopausal well-being,
4. Cancer care particularly in cervical cancer patients and drawing insights from existing research and traditional Yogic principles.

## Methodology

The terms "Yoga Nidra and Women's health" were searched for citations in the internet databases PubMed, PubMed Central, Google Scholar, and Cochrane Library. 3790 references were found in total, spanning the databases' creation dates of inception to 2024. The review comprised experimental publications, case studies, and case series in English describing the effects of *Yoga Nidra*. Studies that combined *Yoga Nidra* with other *Yoga* techniques were not included. The review did not include studies with unavailable abstracts or languages other than English. A total of 10 studies were chosen for the final evaluation after the inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied and the duplicates were eliminated. The studies on *Yoga Nidra* examined hormone profiles, pain, stress, anxiety, depression, sleep, and BMI. Studies have also been done to determine how *Yoga Nidra* affects those who have menstrual irregularities, hormonal imbalance, PCOS, somatoform symptoms related to the menstrual disorder, post-menopausal symptoms, cervical cancer, and different trimester of pregnancy.

**Table 1: Summary of available research literature**

Author	Year	Sample size	Variable studied	Findings
Rani et al.	2012	150	HAM-A, HAM-D	In this study it shows that practice of Yoga Nidra along with pharmacotherapy improve significantly in the symptoms of mild to moderate anxiety and depression in patients with menstrual disorder
Rani et al.	2011	150	Psychological General Wellbeing Index (PGWBI)	The study finds that patients with menstrual irregularities having psychological problems increase significantly in the areas of well-being, anxiety, and depression.
Rani et al.	2011	150	Schedule for clinical assessment in neuropsychiatry (SCAN)	In Yoga Nidra group, somatoform symptoms were relieved along with significant decrease in degree of pain in patients with menstrual disorder
Monika et al.	2012	150	BMI, SBP, DBP, HR, Postural hypotension, HRV, Sustained hand grip test, Valsalva ratio, 30:15 beat ratio, I:E ratio,	SBP, DBP, postural hypotension, sustained hand grip, HR, I:E ratio and 30:15 ratio changed significantly after the intervention
Rani et al.	2016	100	Psychological General Well-being Index (PGWBI), TSH, FSH, LH, prolactin, progesterone, estradiol, testosterone, and DHEA-S	Significant improvement is seen in levels of TSH, FSH, LH, Prolactin and psychological well-being.

Author	Year	Sample size	Variable studied	Findings
Surya Jothi et al.	2024	30	Serum cortisol	Significant reduction in serum cortisol level with improvements in emotional well-being in the Intervention group
Vanitha et al.	2018	40	Weight, BMI, Waist hip ratio, HR, SBP, DBP	The study shows significant reduction in resting cardiovascular parameters such as HR, SBP, DBP and significant decrease in weight, BMI and waist hip ratio after 12 weeks of yoga nidra practice in women with PCOS
D'cunha et al.	2021	48	Stress questionnaire comprising of psychological, physical, social and financial problems	The study showed yoga nidra is effective in mitigating stress in women undergoing curative radiotherapy.
Ajay Kumar et al.	2024	20	Sinha Comprehensive Anxiety Test (SCAT) anxiety scale	Anxiety symptoms are reduced in pregnant women of different trimesters after the practice of yoga nidra for 21 days
Gulia, Sreedharan	2021	Single case	Actigraphy, BMI	Significant changes and improved in mood and sleep, reduced in BMI in post-menopausal subject

## Results

**Effect of Yoga Nidra on Menstrual Disorders:** A six-month randomized controlled trial investigated the effects of *Yoga Nidra* on somatoform symptoms which is assessed by using the Schedule for Clinical Assessment in Neuropsychiatry (SCAN) tool at baseline and after six months of intervention. The intervention group showed significant improvements in somatoform symptoms with a significant reduction in pain symptoms ( $p<0.006$ ), Gastrointestinal Symptoms ( $p<0.002$ ), Cardiovascular Symptoms ( $p<0.004$ ), and Urogenital Symptoms ( $p<0.005$ ). The study concludes that *Yoga Nidra* can be implemented as an intervention for reducing somatoform symptoms and enhancing psychosomatic issues.[10]

A study is conducted by Rani et al. to assess the impact of *Yoga Nidra* on psychological well-being and hormonal profiles in women with menstrual irregularities. The study is assessed using the Psychological General Well-Being Index (PGWBI) and hormonal assays. The intervention group exhibited significant improvement in PGWBI scores and notable reductions in the levels of TSH, FSH, LH, and prolactin suggesting regulatory effects of *Yoga Nidra* on these hormones and concluded that *Yoga Nidra* can effectively alleviate psychological distress and normalize hormonal imbalances and can serve as a complementary therapy along with conventional treatment for menstrual dysfunctions. [7] A study by Monika et al. to assess the impact of *Yoga Nidra* on autonomic nervous system functions in women experiencing menstrual irregularities found that there is significant improvement in blood pressure,

And heart rate and also significant enhancements in autonomic nervous system function such as postural hypotension, sustained handgrip, heart rate expiration-inspiration ratio, and 30:15 ratio. The study concluded that the practice of *Yoga Nidra* positively influences the autonomic nervous system. [11] A randomized controlled trial was conducted by Rani et al. to evaluate the effects of *Yoga Nidra* on psychological well-being in women experiencing menstrual disorders. Psychological well-being was measured using validated assessment tools at multiple time points during the study. After six months, the intervention group experienced a significant decrease in anxiety levels and depression scores with improvements in positive well-being, general health, and vitality.[12] Another study also found that regular practice of *Yoga Nidra* shows a significant reduction in Hamilton Anxiety Rating Scale (HAM-A) and Hamilton Depression Rating Scale (HAM-D) indicating decreased anxiety levels and depressive scores in mild to moderate anxiety and depressive symptoms but there is no improvement in severe anxiety and depressive symptoms. For patients with severe psychological symptoms, additional therapeutic interventions are necessary.[13]

**Effect of Yoga Nidra on PCOS:** In a study conducted by Vanitha et al., *Yoga Nidra* practice for 12 weeks of intervention in women with PCOS resulted in:

- reduction in Blood Pressure (SBP, DBP)
- low HR and BMI,
- Decreased weight, and waist-hip ratio

As stress is main cause of PCOS. Regular practice of any form of Yoga reduces cortisol hormone level,

Balancing the sympathetic nerve activity.[14] Another study by Surya Jothi et al. on impact of *Yoga Nidra* on psychological variables in women with polycystic ovarian syndrome found significant lower levels of serum cortisol in the intervention group. Participants also reported feeling more energetic and emotionally balanced.[15]

**Effect of *Yoga Nidra* on Cervical Cancer:** A study conducted by D Cunha et al. included a specific number of women diagnosed with cervical cancer who were undergoing curative radiotherapy shows a significant reduction in stress compared to the control group. This suggests that *Yoga Nidra* may serve as a complementary therapy to enhance the psychological well-being of patients during cancer treatment.[16]

**Effect of *Yoga Nidra* in Pregnancy:** A study conducted on the effect of *Yoga Nidra* on anxiety in 20 pregnant women of different trimesters using Sinha's comprehensive anxiety score (CSAT), the study found significant reduction in anxiety levels after 21 days of practice (t-value of 4.440, p-value of 0.001), indicating that *Yoga Nidra* effectively decreased anxiety among pregnant women regardless of their trimester.

Hence, *Yoga Nidra* could be beneficial in prenatal care for managing pregnancy-related stress and anxiety.[17]

**Effect of *Yoga Nidra* in post-menopausal symptoms:** A longitudinal case study is conducted for 24 weeks of *Yoga Nidra* to examine the impact of sleep and mood in post-menopausal women. The study found:

- Improved sleep latency: notable improvements after 4 weeks
- Enhanced total sleep time: significant changes by the 16th week
- Elevated morning mood: reduced fatigue upon waking from the 5th week onward

Given the physiological changes in menopause, *Yoga Nidra* may offer a non-pharmacological approach to improving sleep quality and emotional well-being.[18]

**How *Yoga Nidra* Works:** *Yoga Nidra* stimulates the pituitary gland, triggering the release of endogenous morphine-like hormones such as endorphins and enkephalin, which help alleviate stress and prolonged pain.

These hormones enter the cerebrospinal fluid, potentially reducing reliance on external pain medication.[19] Additionally, *Yoga Nidra* influences brain function by promoting relaxation across the nervous system and lowering excessive sympathetic activity.[20]

Its metabolic effects include reduced adrenocortical activity, sustained decreases in cortisol secretion, and improved regulation of thyroid-stimulating hormone (TSH).[7]

While the exact mechanism through which *Yoga Nidra* enhances neurological relaxation and strengthens physiological resilience remains under investigation, it shares notable similarities with sleep. During practice, individuals disengage from external stimuli, enhance parasympathetic activity, and experience dream-like imagery, further contributing to its profound relaxation effects.[21]

## Conclusion

The narrative review concluded that *Yoga Nidra* brings a positive impact, significant improvement, and a safe and holistic approach to women's health. Given its potential to regulate hormonal function, alleviate stress, and enhance well-being, the practice of *Yoga Nidra* should be considered viable complementary therapy for the management of women's health.

Additionally, the current review is restricted to the narrative of the most recent scientific research on *Yoga Nidra* that is currently available. In general, we discovered that performing *Yoga Nidra* under the instruction of a qualified teacher is safe and can be implemented in clinical settings. The effects of *Yoga Nidra* approach have been the subjects of numerous investigations.

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