

KUNDALINI RISING  
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# Beat stress & hypertension: Yoga for heart health matters

As we approach World Heart Day on 29 September, it's a timely reminder to prioritise your heart health, particularly in Bangladesh, where cardiovascular diseases are on the rise.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), heart disease is the leading cause of death in the world.

Sedentary lifestyles, poor diet, and stress are major contributing factors to this growing public health issue. One holistic practice that offers hope is yoga, which not only strengthens the body but also significantly benefits cardiovascular health.

Yoga is a practice that combines physical postures, breathing exercises, and meditation — all of which play a crucial role in maintaining a healthy heart. Research has shown that yoga helps lower blood pressure, improve circulation, reduce stress, and boost overall heart function. It enhances circulation by promoting oxygenation in the blood, improving arterial flexibility and encouraging better

blood flow, helping to reduce the risk of atherosclerosis and heart disease. Regular practice also helps in managing hypertension, a key factor in heart attacks.

Stress is one of the major contributors to heart disease. Yoga practices, especially pranayama (breath control) and meditation, activate the parasympathetic nervous system, promoting relaxation and reducing the harmful effects of chronic stress on the heart.

When combined with a healthy diet, yoga helps maintain a healthy weight and balance cholesterol levels. Sequences like Surya Namaskar (Sun Salutation) offer a cardiovascular workout while being gentle on the body, aiding in weight loss and fat reduction.

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# From adolescent cramps to chronic pain in adulthood

Period cramps are anything but harmless. In fact, according to a study conducted by the University of Oxford, these may be indicators of chronic body pain later in life. The Oxford study, published in *The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health*, was an investigative piece into how painful period cramps, dysmenorrhoea, in adolescence may lead to body pains in young adults. Not only is this pain long-lived, but it may even extend to areas such as the head, the back, and the joints.

Menstrual pains have been known to disrupt the lives of young women and, more often than not, are brushed aside as a "natural" part of growing up. Women now understand that it did not have to be like this if the condition had been taken seriously from the very beginning.

Professor Katy Vincent, a gynaecologist and senior author of the study, noted that it is high



time we recognised the seriousness of the ailment. Considering that there is an indisputable connection between menstrual pains and chronic body pain in young adults, Vincent feels

reduce menstrual pain. Out of these, heat therapy, or using hot water bottles on the abdomen and lower back, is proven to be immensely helpful. Eating anti-inflammatory foods such as pineapples, tomatoes, and garlic can all do their bit to reduce pain, and, as enticing as it feels to reach out for sugar or sodium-heavy snacks, both can work against you, making you more inflamed and bloated. Over-the-counter medicines can help with mild pain, as can massages.

However, what can work more than any of this, what can truly be beneficial, is the support of doctors and professionals who accept that menstrual pains are a real form of discomfort that must be eased for young women, and not something that should simply be tolerated. Once menstrual pain is recognised as an actual ailment, more and more girls will feel empowered to discuss their predicament and benefit from proper diagnosis.

**By Munira Fidai**  
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