

## News and Views

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## NEWS

### Cardiovascular Risk in Post-menopausal Women

Menopause refers to a non-pathological condition, wherein there is cessation of menstruation for at least one year. The age of natural menopause in India is  $46.2 \pm 4.9$  years.<sup>[1]</sup> Research studies show that in urban cities like Pondicherry, more than one-third of the post-menopausal women are having a poor quality of life.<sup>[2]</sup> There is impaired urogenital, vasomotor and cognitive symptoms, caused due to decreased estrogen levels in the body. This estrogen deficient state puts post-menopausal women at a higher risk of cardiovascular events.<sup>[3]</sup> Also, sympathovagal imbalance is observed in post-menopausal women with increased sympathetic activity and reduced parasympathetic activity which adds to the cardiovascular risk.<sup>[4]</sup> Heart rate variability is a sensitive measure of sympathovagal imbalance.<sup>[4]</sup> It is found that there is a decline in heart rate variability in post-menopausal women.<sup>[5]</sup> Recent study shows that post-menopausal state also offers higher risk of developing metabolic syndrome with an increased level of insulin resistance.<sup>[6]</sup> This can also be indicated by deranged lipid profile in them, such as higher triglyceride and total cholesterol.<sup>[7]</sup> With a myriad of symptoms to deal with, there are fewer treatment alternatives for post-menopausal women.

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## VIEWS

### Effect of Yoga on Cardiovascular Risk in Post-Menopausal Women

Women spend around one third of their life in post-menopausal state. Apart from increased cardiovascular risk, they suffer from an array of symptoms involving urogenital, vasomotor, and cognitive functions. Some of these symptoms are severe enough to impact their daily activities. In the west, most women reach out for medical help and practice conventional hormone replacement therapy. But in developing countries like India, due to socioeconomic constraints, post-menopausal women do not even recognize their symptoms and the risks involved. This is one of the reasons why more cases of cardiovascular disease are observed in these women in post-menopausal state. We all have at least one woman around us, suffering in silence from their menopausal symptoms.

Yoga has recently become one of the most popular mind-body therapies practiced in India. Yoga is believed to bring stability to body and mind of the individual. The three majorly practiced components are asanas, pranayamas and dhyana. The sympathovagal imbalance with increased sympathetic and decreased parasympathetic tone is the cause of cardiovascular risk in post-menopausal women. The different breathing techniques of slow pranayamas lower the sympathetic activity and increase the parasympathetic activity, hence restore the balance between them in the body, and reduce the cardiovascular risk. With regular practice, it has the potential to ease out the symptoms and delay the onset of cardiovascular diseases in post-menopausal women. On the other hand different asanas or yogic postures also help to ease the discomfort, such as back and joint pain and fatigue observed in post-menopausal state. Hence, yoga therapy should be set up as non-pharmacological alternative for post-menopausal women. This will build a better quality of life for those women.