

Yoga and the Reproductive System

The Hypothalamus and Pituitary are the producers and directors of the whole endocrine system. The hypothalamus controls all hormonal release to regulate our reproductive cycles as well as our body temperature. It secretes hormones that signal the pituitary (the master gland) to do its work. The pituitary in turn controls each individual gland of the endocrine system. After being triggered by the hypothalamus, the pituitary secretes the hormones that control the functioning of the ovaries and feed the involuntary muscles of the uterus.

The Ovaries are responsible for the development of the ovum and the secretion of the hormones estrogen and progesterone, as well as male hormones. Estrogen develops and maintains the reproductive organs, and along with progesterone, is responsible for endometrial growth and secretions during the menstrual cycle.

The following postures are recommended for women to practice regularly to help reduce uncomfortable symptoms of PMS and irregular menstrual cycles. However, during menstruation it is recommended to avoid long holding of postures, inversions and stimulating pranayama.

The Dirgha (complete breath), Ujjayi (ocean breath) breath, and passive alternate nostril breaths like Nadi Shodhana and Anuloma Viloma are good to practice for their calming, cooling and balancing effects. Meditation is also very beneficial and nurturing to practice regularly, especially during menstruation.

- Bow
- Head to knee
- Seated forward angle
- Boat
- Headstand, half or full
- Seated spinal twist
- Bound angle
- Hero
- Shoulder stand, half or full
- Child
- Knee down twist
- Standing hand to foot
- Cobra
- Locust
- Supine diamond
- Downward facing dog
- Pigeon
- Turtle
- Fish 1 & 2
- Posterior stretch
- Wheel, half or full

These postures are especially beneficial for women to help stimulate and balance the function of the reproductive glands.

- Boat
- Fish
- Pigeon
- Bow
- Headstand, half or full
- Shoulder stand, half or full
- Child
- Hero
- Cobra
- Locust

Please note that although these yoga postures can be practiced on your own, it is best to have a qualified teacher to help you with alignment and modifications to suit your body's ability.

Resources

- *Yoga, A Gem for Women* by Gita Iyengar
- *Women Coming of Age* by Jane Fonda
- *Light on Yoga* by B.K.S. Iyengar
- *Kripalu Yoga Posture Book*

This information came from the references listed and Tony Riposo 2001