

## **THE HEALING POWER OF YOGA: A HOLISTIC APPROACH FOR NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES**

Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) are chronic conditions that progress slowly and profoundly affect a person's holistic health and well-being. Each year, it is estimated that NCDs accounts for 74% of all global deaths, equivalent to 41 million people.<sup>1</sup> Premature death is one of the major issue of NCDs which accounts around 17 million annual death globally. Of them, over 85% deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). NCDs also comprise a huge burden in Nepal in terms of the treatment costs, lost productivity, reduced quality of life, and mortality.<sup>2</sup>

Managing a chronic condition like NCDs entails physical limitations and lifestyle adjustments, which can also lead to emotional, and psychological impact such as stress, anxiety, depression, and social isolation.<sup>3</sup> The rising burden of NCDs globally, along with their long term impact on holistic health results in a substantial social and financial burden for individuals, families, societies and the nations.<sup>3</sup> Studies suggested that NCDs management strategies should focus on the individual level, emphasizing personal responsibility for health through adopting healthy lifestyle. Hence, exploring and promoting holistic approaches to improve overall health and well-being is crucial.

Yoga offers a promising avenue for addressing the burden of NCDs at an individual level.<sup>4</sup> Research has demonstrated its potential in preventing and managing NCDs.<sup>5</sup> Yoga encompasses a wide range of physical postures, breathing exercises, and meditation techniques, all of which have been shown to have profound effects on the body and mind. One of the key ways in which yoga can contribute to NCD prevention is through its impact on risk factors such as obesity, hypertension, and high cholesterol.<sup>6</sup> Regular practice of yoga has been associated with weight management, improved cardiovascular health, and better metabolic function. Additionally, the relaxation and stress-reducing effects of yoga can help lower blood pressure and reduce the risk of heart disease.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, yoga has been shown to support healthy immune function and reduce inflammation, which are critical factors in the prevention and management of NCDs.



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In addition to physical benefits like improved flexibility, balance and strengths, yoga offers mental and emotional support crucial for addressing NCDs.<sup>6</sup> The practice of mindfulness and meditation in yoga can help individuals cope with the psychological stress and emotional burden often associated with chronic diseases. By promoting a sense of calm, self-awareness, and resilience, yoga can empower individuals to better manage the challenges of living with NCDs.<sup>7</sup> It is important to note that while yoga offers significant potential in NCD prevention and management, it is not a substitute for medical treatment. Rather, it should be seen as a complementary approach that can enhance overall health and well-being. As such, integrating yoga into comprehensive NCD prevention and management programs can provide individuals with a holistic toolkit for addressing their health needs.

In conclusion, the evidence supporting the role of yoga in preventing and managing NCDs is compelling. As the global burden of NCDs continues to grow, it is imperative that we embrace and promote holistic approaches to health. By recognizing and harnessing the potential of yoga, we can empower individuals to actively engage in their health and well-being, and ultimately, work towards reducing the impact of NCDs on a global scale.

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