Shavasana
(Corpse Pose)

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The contents of this bibliography do not provide medical advice and should not be so interpreted. Before beginning any exercise program, see your physician for clearance.


Summary of Dr. Ananda Balayogi’s article: One’s head should always be positioned to the north.

Summary of Deolal Mahabir’s article: It does not ultimately matter in which direction one’s head is positioned.


The following review of this study appears in an article by Ralph La Forge entitled “Spotlight on Yoga” in the May 2001 issue of *IDEA Health and Fitness Source* (http://www.findarticles.com/cf_0/m0BTW/5_19/74886169/p1/article.jhtml?term=yoga):

Study: Researchers at the Scientific Research Department at Kaivalyadhama S.M.Y.M. Samiti in Lonavla, India, compared the efficacy of Shavasana (a yogic relaxation posture) and two other postures (resting in a chair and resting in the supine position) as methods of recovery from induced physiological stress (treadmill running).

Twenty-one males and six females (age range = 21-30 years) were allowed to rest in one of the above postures after completing a treadmill workout. Recovery was assessed by measuring resting and exercise recovery heart rate and blood pressure. These factors were measured before and every two minutes after the treadmill running until they returned to their initial resting levels.

The results revealed that the effects of treadmill exercise stress were reversed in significantly (p < 0.01) shorter time with Shavasana than with either of the other two resting postures.
Comments: The Shavasana pose (sometimes spelled “Savasana” or called “corpse pose”) is often overlooked as an effective yoga pose. Seemingly easy, it is one of the most challenging poses in yoga. Shavasana is practiced in a relaxed supine position, feet apart, palms facing up to gently open the chest. The neck should be extended. (Placing a folded towel underneath the neck is recommended.) What primarily distinguishes Shavasana from the other two modes of relaxation used in this study is utilization of the breath. Abdominal yogic breathing is sequenced with normal breathing throughout Shavasana.

Bhamgara, M. M. How to relax. *Yoga and Life*, no. 5, p. 11.


“Diehard Savasana fans may wonder why you’d ever mess with such a good thing, but variety may be the spice of relaxation and renewal. Here are some reasons to bring variations of Supported Savasana into your teaching.”

Dante, Michele. Answers the question: I find corpse pose to be the hardest for me to practice. My mind races, thoughts come and go, music is in my head, and so I find it very difficult to concentrate on the sensation of the breath and deep realxation. Is there something you can recommend that will help me? Article available online: http://www.innervisionyoga.com/index.php?nid=article&article_id=35.


Abstract: “Shavasan,” a yogic exercise, was given to 47 patients with hypertension of various etiologies. A significant response was obtained in about 52 percent of the patients. There was no response in patients with arteriosclerotic hypertension. The exercise is easy to perform, has no side effects and requires no equipment. There was symptomatic relief and a sense of “well being” in the vast majority of the patients.


The Editors. Answer the question, “My mind often races in Savasana (Corpse Pose), and I find it difficult to concentrate on the sensation of the breath and deep relaxation. Is there something you can recommend to help?” Yoga Journal, Mar/Apr 2002, p. 42.


Herring, Barbara Kaplan. Savasana: If you fall asleep during Corpse Pose, you are missing a great opportunity to practice pratyahara, the art of letting go. *Yoga Journal*, Dec 2002, pp. 61-63.


Examined the effectiveness of Shavasana (a type of yoga exercise) as a therapeutic technique to alleviate depression. 50 female university students were diagnosed with severe depression; 25 were subjected to 30 sessions of Shavasana, and 25 served as controls. Results reveal that (1) Shavasana was an effective technique for alleviating depression and (2) continuation of the treatment for a longer period resulted in a significantly increased positive change in the Ss.


Macy, Dayna. Shavasana, the hardest pose. In Dayna Macy, “Pregnant pause: Two months before my twins were due, my doctor put me on strict bed rest,” Yoga Journal, Sep/Oct 2000, pp. 137-140.


Abstract: Shavasan is known to enhance one’s ability to combat stressful situations. The present study was planned to determine if shavasan could modulate the physiological response to stress induced by cold pressor test (CPT) and the possible mechanisms involved. Ten normal adults were taught shavasan and practiced the same for a total duration of seven days. RR interval variation (RRIV), deep breathing difference (DBD), and heart rate, blood pressure and rate-pressure-product (RPP) response to CPT were measured before and immediately after shavasan. Shavasan produced a significant increase in DBD and an appreciable but statistically insignificant increase in RRIV suggesting an enhanced parasympathetic activity. Significant blunting of cold pressor-induced increase in heart rate, blood pressure and RPP by shavasan was seen during and even five minutes after CPT suggesting that shavasan reduces the load on the heart by blunting the sympathetic response. It is concluded that shavasan can enhance one’s ability to withstand stress induced by CPT and this ability can be achieved even with seven days of shavasan training.


Abstract: The present study was conducted in trained (n=7) and untrained (n=7) volunteers to determine the effect of savitri pranayam and shavasan on O2 consumption, heart rate and blood pressure. In trained subjects we found a consistent and significant (p<0.01) reduction in O2 consumption within a few minutes of starting savitri pranayam. During shavasan, there was significant reduction in O2 consumption (p<0.05), heart rate (p<0.001) and diastolic blood pressure (p<0.05). In untrained subjects, the changes in above mentioned parameters were statistically insignificant.

Nilsson, Robert. Savasana: One of the most important yoga poses. *Bindu*, no. 7, pp. 28-29.


__________. Answers the question: “It is very hard for me to totally relax and be still during Corpse Pose. I become agitated and my stomach often growls in the middle of it. Any suggestions?” *Yoga Journal*. Article available online: http://www.yogajournal.com/practice/687_1.cfm?ctsrc=nlv47.


Humorous article on what might go through the mind of the teacher and the student during *savasana*.


Includes: Yoga-nidra, a relaxation method that works with 36 areas of the body; Tension release through the five koshas (layers) of the body; A special meditation for healing areas of pain and blockage; Lunar shavasana, a means to rest the sense organs and induce deep and restful sleep; “Awakening the Lotus,” a chakra-based meditation, and more.


Discusses *shavâsana* and *padmâsana*.

Satish, S. Telles, and H. R. Nagendra. BMR studies on SMET in comparison to shavasana. Swami Vivekananda Yoga Research Foundation.


Savasana. *Bindu*, no. 7.


Stawsky, Natalie. Savasana o postura del cadaver. *LA Yoga*, Mar/Apr 2004, pp. 50-51. [In Spanish.]


The author is a psychotherapist and Yoga teacher and introduces the article: “Krishnamacharya, teacher of both Pattabhi Jois and B.K.S. Iyengar, taught each of his students the same approach to savasana. This article is a psychological exploration of the posture as taught to me through this lineage.”

39(3):203-208. (Utilized shavasana.)


Abstract: The present study was conducted to evaluate a statement in ancient yoga texts that suggests that a combination of both “calming” and “stimulating” measures may be especially helpful in reaching a state of mental equilibrium. Two yoga practices, one combining “calming and stimulating” measures (cyclic meditation) and the other, a “calming” technique (shavasan), were compared. The oxygen consumption, breath rate, and breath volume of 40 male volunteers (group mean +/- SD, 27.0 +/- 5.7 years) were assessed before and after sessions of cyclic meditation (CM) and before and after sessions of shavasan (SH). The 2 sessions (CM, SH) were 1 day apart. Cyclic meditation includes the practice of yoga postures interspersed with periods of supine relaxation. During SH the subject lies in a supine position throughout the practice. There was a significant decrease in the amount of oxygen consumed and in breath rate and an increase in breath volume after both types of sessions (2-factor ANOVA, paired t test). However, the magnitude of change on all 3 measures was greater after CM: (1) Oxygen consumption decreased 32.1% after CM compared with 10.1% after SH; (2) breath rate decreased 18.0% after CM and 15.2% after SH; and (3) breath volume increased 28.8% after CM and 15.9% after SH. These results support the idea that a combination of yoga postures interspersed with relaxation reduces arousal more than relaxation alone does.