

THERAPEUTIC YOGA FOR ASTHMA AND ALLERGIES

I. KOSHAS

- A. Anamaya Kosha—Asthma and Allergies are both related to hyperactivity of the respiratory tract. In asthma, the lower portion is affected. In allergies, the upper portion. Asthma is a Greek derivative meaning panting or gasping. In asthma the air passageways spasm in response to stressors such as cold air, atmospheric irritants, dust, fumes, sprays, gases, extreme exercise and/or no exercise, diet, poor digestion, and emotional tension. Asthma is temporarily narrowing vs damage to passageways which is emphysema or bronchitis. In allergies the body response with a release of histamine causing blood vessels to dilate, fluid to leak from tissues, muscles to constrict. Histamines also attract other cells which cause further damage and inflammation. The body responds with itchy eyes, hay fever, allergic rhinitis, sneezing, running nose, blocked and stuffed nose. From the ayurvedic viewpoint: these conditions are a vata-kapha disease. Vata elevates, main agni goes down, rasa dhatu goes down—phlegm is waste product of this dhatu. Phlegm collects, Kapha increases, leads to weakened immune system, digestive problems, skin diseases, increased stress and anxiety.
- B. Pranamaya Kosha—Once the physical body moves into this state the separation begins in the pranamaya kosha. The only energy seemingly available is high and tight in the chest, making the apana and prana function at a deficit due to the inability of the lungs/bronchii to take in and release enough breath. The samana, vyana and udana vayus are also disturbed due to shallow breathing. The primary chakra involved is the 4th, the cause seems to be an imbalance in the 1st and 3rd (ie, not feeling safe, fear of survival and disempowerment).
- C. Manomayakosha—In the emotional body, with this feeling of disempowerment, there is an inability to impact the environment in a way that will create safety for themselves. There tends to be a sensitivity to conflict. In asthma, there is a withdrawal from the conflict by contracting the life force. In allergies, there is a more outward expression of the disharmony. Both create a barrier to taking in, possibly due to the feeling of not being able to let go. Lastly, anticipatory anxiety can habituate the pattern.
- D. Vijnanamaya Kosha—The witness body during an asthmatic or allergic response is so focused at the survival level because of loss of breath that everything else becomes unimportant. Therefore, the ability to discern what is dangerous from what is not dangerous is lacking.
- E. Anandamaya Kosha—Separation occurs at this level when dvesha, the flight response or aversion is present.

II. WELLNESS PRINCIPLES FOR ASTHMA AND ALLERGIES

- A. Anamaya Kosha—
Body Awareness: Visualizations which connect to respiratory system
Asanas that open and lengthen chest, strengthen diaphragm, clear head and ground
Restorative poses supported fish and bridge.
- B. Pranamaya Kosha—
3 part breath with ujjaii; 3 stage exhale breathing technique; straw breath;
Pranavidya exercise on vayus;
Sharira mudra series, asthma mudra, allergy mudra, bronchial mudra
- C. Manomaya Kosha—
Woodchopper emotional release technique
Exercises that focus on creating grounding and boundaries
Relaxation—guided visualization on pranavidya that is heart-focused and involves touch
Journal writing to express and acknowledge feelings and to develop awareness of needs
Gradual desensitization through visualization
- D. Vijnanamaya Kosha
Journal writing to develop sense of inner guide
Yoga Nidra
Visualization to develop the ability of witnessing self
- E. Anandamaya Kosha
Meditation on vayus to dissolve boundaries

Affirmation—I detach myself from everything that constricts me and fully enjoy my new freedom. I feel safe and secure in the divine light which gives me support.

III. YOGA CLASS FOR ASTHMA AND ALLERGIES

1. Body scan during restorative (over bolster) focusing on respiratory system—lobes of lungs
2. Cat/dog tilts – neutral spine in dog to focus on opening chest
3. Vajrasana series
4. Squat balance to
5. Uttanasana
6. ½ uttanasana – hands on knees – open heart
7. tadasana with flat back
8. Sharira mudra series in tadasana
9. Flowing arm tadasana
10. Triangle
11. Uttanasana to
12. Squat balance to
13. Savasana to
14. Floating bridge
15. Apanasana
16. Twist – both knees over
17. Stay in twist do straw breathing
18. Savasana – relaxation
19. Pranayama – exhale 1/3, 1/3, 1/3
20. Meditation – feeling pranic body through pranavayu mudras, focusing on feet, feeling your boundary, dissolving boundaries