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THE  
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MYTHS  
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*for* SPORTS  
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by Umesh Dwivedi  
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# Yoga

## for **SPORTS & GYM ENTHUSIAST**

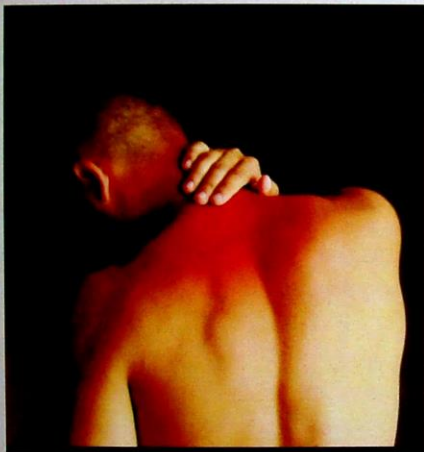


As such no comparison can be made between Yoga and other sports or even gym or aerobics. Reason is very simple that each of these activities is made with different goals and purposes. This is similar to a question when you ask which fruit is better, apple or orange. Many people who visit me are from these different physical workout areas have different physical issues or limitations or injuries. Issue comes when you target only fixed set of muscles or body parts and ignore other areas of body. In this case whichever part is ignored, it starts giving trouble. On the other hand if any part is overly strained then also it may trouble you. Very low range of motion of different joints is another limitation observed in people practicing these activities. In sports, injuries can be traumatic but in gym there are certain nontraumatic (occurs over time and not suddenly) pain areas. If you combine gym or sports with yoga then you can overcome most of your limitations and fill in those gaps which are root cause of your issues. Following sections talk about common injuries people involved in Sports and gym encounter time to time.



**BACK PAIN AND NECK PAIN**

Back Pain comes normally at the lower part of body when you rotate backbone instead of hips. Other reason is having weak supportive muscles of your back which transfer load directly on the backbone. To lift heavy weight or to have good rotation of your upper body you have to have good range of motion in the pelvic joint. Same happens with neck but neck is greater victim because we hardly do anything for the fitness of neck muscles and bones. Sudden rotation of neck, while playing is most common activity and when not ready, you end up having neck injuries.



**MUSCLE IMBALANCE**

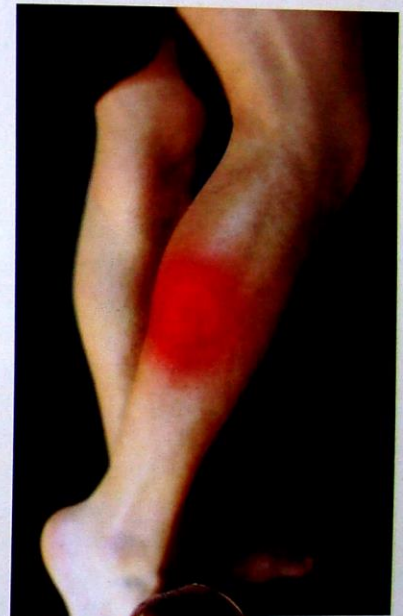
Muscle imbalance occurs where there is unequal tightness in balancing muscles. For example, extra workout on chest in gym, without enough exercise of back muscles, leads to muscle imbalance in the thoracic part. In Cricket and football, muscle imbalance occurs because of one hand or leg dominance. In such sports muscles impacted are back and hamstring. In case of badminton and lawn tennis when dominant side of hand is made more powerful there then it results in issues of neck and shoulder girdle side. Knee pain is result of imbalance in the hamstring and quadriceps muscles in many cases.

**PLANTAR FASCIITIS**

It is a condition or an inflammation in the Plantar Fascia, the tissue which runs along the bottom of the foot. In this, plantar fascia stretches irregularly and inflamed. Normally biomechanics of foot, ankle and legs decided actual working of different muscle groups in that region.

**CALF MUSCLE STRAIN**

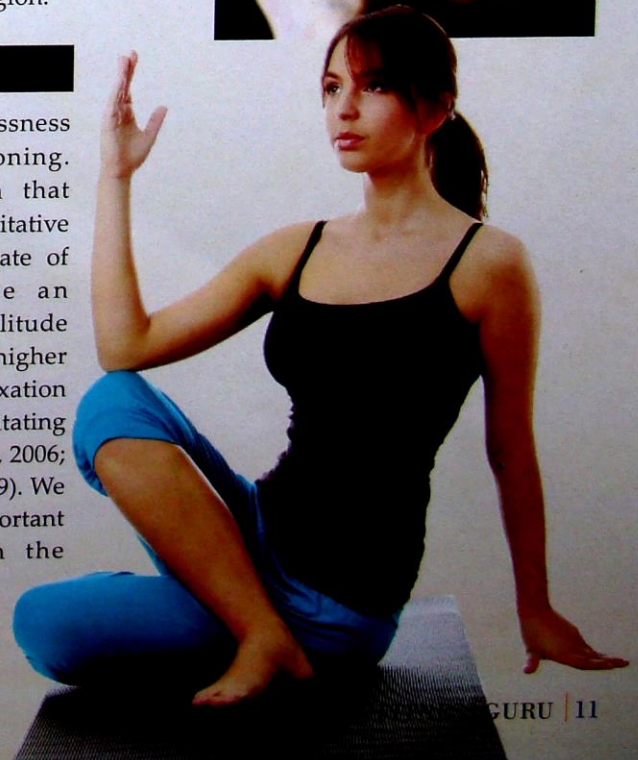
Though posture looks very simple but more and more sports and gym people find it difficult to sit in squatting posture (keeping their feet straight and touching complete sole on the floor). They have high rate of ankle, foot and heel pain. In case of athlete, they suffer from "Chronic exertional compartment syndrome" which means fascia tissue is unable to expand when muscle expands.



**WHY YOGA ?**

As said earlier, each activity has different goals and approaches and this applies for yoga as well. Improved flexibility and joint ROM (range of motion) in Yoga reduce muscle tension and enhance sport biomechanics. This enhancement reduces the amount of energy needed for those movements. Yoga improves breathing capacity of lungs by means of pranayama and aerobic-based sports need efficient lungs. The researchers have found it's not just that of brains of top sports performers function differently, they also have "peak" experiences. These peak experiences are characterized by happiness, inner calm, maximum

wakefulness, effortless and ease of functioning. Research has shown that individuals in a meditative state (relaxed, clear state of mind) demonstrate an increased alpha amplitude activity along with higher levels of mental relaxation compared to non meditating controls (Cahn & Polich, 2006; Kasamatsu & Hirai, 1969). We will cover few most important benefits of yoga in the following sections.





**YOGA FOLLOWS SYMMETRY**

In Yoga importance is given to symmetry. Every asana should be performed on both sides of your body. To avoid dominance affect, you can retain posture for longer time on the side which is nondominating. This way you build both sides of your body equally strong. Muscle imbalance issue can be taken care by symmetrical yoga approaches.

**TARGETING SPECIFIC GROUP OF MUSCLES OR LIGAMENTS OR BONES**

In Yoga we can target specific group of muscles or ligament to improve performance. For example, Paschimattanasana (forward band Pose) ,Purvottansana (Upward Plank Pose) are best postures to Stretches hamstrings and calf muscles (gastrocnemius and soleus) and back muscles. Asanas targeting these muscles are very good for any muscle imbalance in the legs and they also improve rigid calf muscle fascia flexibility. There are other yoga postures which works on Plantar fasciitis like Adho Mukha Svanasana (Downward Facing Dog Pose) and Parsvottanasana (Intense stretch Pose). Standing posture of the body is decided by interaction between Psoas, hamstrings and rectus abdominus muscles. Bhujangasana (Cobra Pose) , Trikonasana (Triangle Pose) and Setu Bandhasana (bridge Pose) are best for these muscles.

**PNF SIDE OF YOGA**

Yoga postures have many variations based on the physical condition of the person. PNF (proprioceptive neuromuscular facilitation) is stretching technique commonly used in clinical environments to improve range of motion. Yoga with PNF is best combination to heal any injury faster and achieve very good flexibility and stability. Better flexibility also increases athletic performance.

**YOGA IS VERY SAFE**

If we do retrospection then we can infer that injuries happen when there is sudden movement or impact of external factor is involved. There is no sudden movement in Yoga nor there any external factor like lifting load present that can create sudden overloading to your muscles. Yoga recommends doing everything within your limitations. There are indeed complex yoga postures if tried without getting mastery of basic asanas, may result in injuries but those are not required to be done to cure your injuries induced by sports or gym.

**PROPRIOCEPTION AND KINESTHETIC AWARENESS THROUGH YOGA**

Yoga builds awareness and reduces stress. More awareness means less accidents and less stress means more relaxed muscles. Awareness of breathing is good to avoid exhaustion and it helps building stamina. In sports or gym "kinesthetic awareness" plays very important role for improved performance. kinesthetic awareness and Proprioception awareness go hand in hand. Kinesthetic awareness is an external sense (the body in space and time) and Proprioception is an inner sense (the central nervous system). For example when football player runs along with the ball he uses Proprioception awareness and while dodging he uses Kinesthetic awareness. Yoga helps building these through balancing asanas and pranayama to have better working of nervous system.

**HEAL FASTER WITH YOGA**

Yoga boosts immune system by building lungs capacity for more oxygenated blood. Better immune system helps faster recovery and expedites healing process. Most injuries are result of overwork of your body. Yoga is best escape to remain relaxed in recovery phase at the same time enjoying moderate physical movements.

In short, Yoga is not an alternative to any other activities but it should be part of your regular physical regimen no matter what activity you are engaged in as your passion. It accelerates your performance in the activities you are involved in.

