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## Impact of pranayama practices on maximum oxygen consumption among working men and women of different age groups

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### Abstract

The aim of the study was to analyze the changes on maximum oxygen consumption in response to pranayama practices among working men and women of different age groups. To achieve the aim of this study eighty middle aged people were selected in Virudhunagar District schools, in which 40 subjects were men and remaining 40 subjects were women. They were further categorized into four sub-groups of 20 subjects each. The first one is 40-44 age groups of men and women separately and another one 45-49 age groups of men and women separately. The maximum oxygen consumption was selected as dependent variable for the study. During the training period, the experimental groups underwent pranayama practices six days a week for twelve weeks. Three-way analysis of variance was used to find out the influence of each factor independently and also their combined influence on each of the selected variables. The level of confidence was fixed at 0.05 for significance. The result of the study shows that due to the effect of pranayama practices the maximum oxygen consumption of 40-44 and 45-49 age category men and women were significantly decreased. It also gives the existence of insignificant difference on maximum oxygen consumption among gender in relevance to different age categories during pre and post tests.

**Keywords:** Pranayama practices, Maximum oxygen consumption

### Introduction

An appropriate yoga practice first begins by giving attention to breathing. A person can live without food for about 30 days and without water for about three to six days. But a person can survive without the breath for only five to seven minutes before death. Obviously, breathing is imperative to the sustenance of life. But the breath also has a profound effect upon the nervous system. The yogis have known for thousands of years that there is an intimate connection between the body, the mind and the breath; and that emotions are directly affected by breathing. Accordingly, the yogis developed intricate methods of controlling the breath as a method of controlling the mind and body; metabolism, and emotions.

All our physiological processes are controlled by the nervous system. One branch of the nervous system, called the sympathetic nervous system (SNS), is affected by how we breathe. Rapid and shallow breathing depletes carbon dioxide, which causes the sympathetic nervous system to become activated. This results in increased heart rate and blood pressure, which leads to sweaty palms and feet, high levels of anxiety (the flight or fight syndrome), and more. Yoga breathing is an effective method that helps restore and maintain normal carbon dioxide levels. Yoga exercises become more comfortable and powerful when inhalation and exhalation flow freely. The subtle flowing of air into and out of the nose stimulates a relaxation response, which directly affects the brain and nervous system. Breathing through the nose also warms and filters the air further reducing its impact upon the nervous system. Normal breathing oxygenates our blood and removes the noxious byproducts of metabolism and respiration. Controlled yoga breathing (pranayama) when appropriately practiced accelerates this process. The exercises of pranayama the correct breathing technique helps to manipulate our energies. Most of us breathe incorrectly, using only half of our lung capacity. Pranayama is a technique, which re-educates our breathing process, helps us to release tensions and develop a relaxed state of mind. It also balances our nervous system and encourages creative thinking.

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