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EFFECT OF BHUJANGASANA (COBRA POSE) IN ALPARTAVA (HYPOMENORRHEA): A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

A woman's health plays a crucial role in the welfare of her family, society, and culture. Various physiological changes take place at birth and more significant transformations occurring during puberty of female. However, modern lifestyle factors such as inactivity, poor diet, and stress can disrupt the normal functioning of the hypothalamic-pituitary-ovarian-uterine axis, leading to a range of gynaecological issues. Hypomenorrhea is one of the menstrual disorders characterized by an abnormally light menstrual flow. The amount of bleeding is noticeably less than what is typical for the individual, and in some cases, it may present as mere spotting or last for only a short time—often under two days. In Ayurveda, hypomenorrhea is referred to as *Alpartava*. Classical texts describe most menstrual disorders under the categories of *Ashta Artava Dushti*, *Artava Kshaya*, *Anartava*, *Kashtartava*, and *Nashta Artava*. *Alpa Artava* is often observed as a symptom associated with various reproductive disorders. Considering its clinical features, it can be closely correlated with the condition known as hypomenorrhea. In modern medicine, the available treatments for symptoms often do not address the underlying cause of the condition. Moreover, they can lead to side effects such as weight gain, reduced libido, headaches, mood swings, and can also be expensive. Ayurveda Classics suggest that *yoga* can help manage *Alpartava* (hypomenorrhea). One such *yoga* pose, *Bhujangasana* (Cobra Pose), is known to enhance spinal flexibility, strengthen the back and uterine muscles, and promote better blood flow during menstruation.

KEYWORDS: Alpartava, Hypomenorrhea, Bhujangasana, Cobra pose, Yoga, Artva Dushti.

INTRODUCTION

The menstrual cycle is a vital physiological process that occurs during a woman's reproductive years. It begins with menarche at puberty and concludes with menopause. Any disruption in physiological or psychological balance can interfere with the normal menstrual process, potentially resulting in various disorders and even infertility. *Acharya Sushruta* describes *alpartava* as menstrual bleeding that is delayed or occurs irregularly, with a reduced flow, and is often accompanied by pain in the *yoni* (vaginal region). This condition is attributed to the disturbance of *Vata* and *Pitta Doshas*. In this context, "delayed" refers to a cycle extending beyond one month, while "scanty bleeding" means the menstrual flow lasts for less than three days.[1] One study reported the prevalence of menstrual disorders to be 61.95%, while other studies conducted in India have documented considerably higher rates, ranging from 85.00% to 93.40%.[2] The two primary contributors to menstrual disorders are body fat levels and physical activity. Additionally, various internal factors can play a role, including uterine fibroids, hormonal imbalances, blood clotting disorders, cancer, sexually transmitted infections, polycystic ovary syndrome, and genetic predisposition.[3] To help prevent such disorders, engaging in regular physical activity, including yoga asanas, is essential. Yoga postures help channel vital energy to the reproductive organs and contribute to hormonal balance, aiding in the regulation of menstrual cycles. *Bhujangasana*, also known as the Cobra Pose, is a key posture in yoga that has been shown to have beneficial effects on reproductive health. This paper highlights the effectiveness of *Bhujangasana* (Cobra Pose) in managing *Alpartava* (Hypomenorrhea) among women of reproductive age.

Bhujangasana (Cobra pose) procedure[4]

1. Lie flat on your stomach with your legs together. Place your hands, palms facing down, beneath your shoulders. Let your forehead rest gently on the floor.
2. As you inhale, begin to lift your head, sliding your nose and then your chin along the floor. Raise your hands slightly off the ground and engage your back muscles to lift your chest as high as you can. Hold this position for a few breaths. As you exhale, slowly return to the starting position, keeping your chin lifted until the very end.
3. Inhale again and lift your upper body as before, but this time use your hands to gently press into the floor, helping to lift your torso higher. Continue the movement until you are arching from the middle of your spine. Hold the pose for 2 to 3 deep breaths, then exhale and gradually lower yourself back down.

4. Inhale and lift your upper body as you did earlier, but this time continue rising and arching backward until you feel the entire spine—from your neck to the base—engaging in the bend. Breathe naturally and hold the pose for as long as it feels comfortable. When you're ready, gently lower yourself back down and relax.

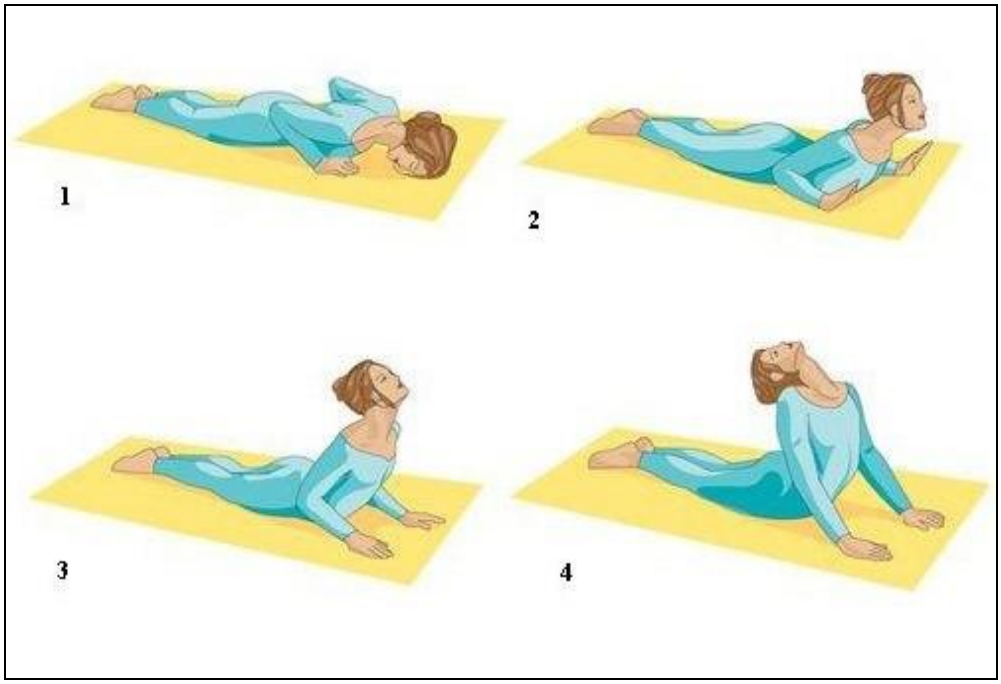


Image 1: Posture 1 to 4 shows the above-mentioned steps of *Bhujangasana*.

DISCUSSION

Hypomenorrhea can naturally occur at the edges of a woman's reproductive life—soon after puberty and in the years leading up to menopause. This happens because ovulation tends to be irregular during these times, which affects the normal buildup of the uterine lining. However, hypomenorrhea outside of these stages may also be linked to certain health issues. Hormonal imbalances such as low thyroid hormone, elevated prolactin, insulin, or androgen levels, as well as other hormonal disruptions, can interfere with ovulation and result in reduced menstrual bleeding.[5] If no major underlying cause is identified, no treatment is needed apart from providing reassurance. The rising interest in alternative and complementary medicine has contributed to the growing global popularity of yoga and its recognized health benefits. *Bhujangasana*, one of the yoga poses also known as the Cobra Pose, is a key posture in yoga that has been shown to have beneficial effects on reproductive health. In the context of hypomenorrhea (scanty or infrequent menstrual flow), *Bhujangasana* is believed to improve blood circulation to the pelvic region and stimulate the abdominal and reproductive organs. This increased blood flow can help in regulating hormonal function and

supporting the normal functioning of the ovaries and uterus. Furthermore, the pose helps reduce stress and promotes relaxation by balancing the autonomic nervous system, which may play a role in correcting menstrual irregularities. Practicing *Bhujangasana* regularly, as part of a broader yoga regimen, can contribute to hormonal balance and potentially alleviate symptoms associated with hypomenorrhea. *Bhujangasana* has been found to alleviate stress and decrease sympathetic nervous system activity while promoting parasympathetic activity, thereby enhancing overall quality of life and reducing psychiatric symptoms. It also supports both physical and mental well-being by suppressing the activity of the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis and the sympathetic nervous system, which can be beneficial in managing hypomenorrhea. Additionally, it is effective for managing stress, reducing abdominal fat, and relieving constipation.[6,7] And *Bhujangasana* is thought to alleviate pain by aiding the brain's pain center in managing the gate control mechanism within the spinal cord and stimulating the release of the body's natural pain-relieving chemicals. Hence it also helpful in dysmenorrhea.[8]

CONCLUSION

An in-depth analysis of *Bhujangasana* (Cobra Pose) and its impact on hypomenorrhea indicates that this yoga asana offers considerable benefits in managing the condition. It activates the pelvic and abdominal regions, enhances blood flow to the reproductive organs, and supports hormonal balance. Due to these therapeutic effects, *Bhujangasana* is considered a helpful and effective practice for those dealing with hypomenorrhea (reduced menstrual flow). Practicing this pose regularly may contribute to improved reproductive health and help address the root causes of menstrual disturbances.

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