

NAULI (abdominal churning)

Nauli is one of the kriyas or cleansing practices to be found within the Hatha Yoga Pradipika although to practice it we first need to be familiar with the practice of Uddiyana Bandha.

Uddiyana Bandha “Flying Upwards Lock”

Ways of introducing UB

Over time you need to gradually increase abdominal strength and control, developing body & breath awareness. It should also be taught after the other two bandhas are familiar. It would usually be taught at the very earliest in the second year of yoga classes and only then if the class is fit and enthusiastic; generally we would wait until later when the class is working with kumbhaka (breath retention) within the context of pranayama.

1) First to locate where the effect is felt, lie semi-supine on the floor, inhale raising arms behind, swoosh the air out and there will be an involuntary deep hollow experienced at the edge of the lower front of the ribs. This would be appropriate for all, except those with hiatus hernia, abdominal problems or pregnancy.

2) Then one simple seated version to help us explore UB is to sit on a chair or the floor, planting the tailbone down, growing out of the pelvis. Take a deep breath in whilst pressing hands into the floor or thighs, expanding the chest & ribcage. Then we exhale swooshing air out through the mouth, adopting jalandhara bandha as we lean forwards pressing hands to the thighs or floor; draw the belly back towards the spine as we actively keep lifting the chest, spreading the ribcage away from the spine.

We need to keep shoulders down, staying in Jalandhara bandha, and simply pause for as long as is comfortable relaxing the abdomen, exhaling a little more if possible. **After a short while of practice we may experience a kind of a suction action where the flow of prana and apana are reversed and UB is activated.**

Alternatively we can practice in a bent leg standing position ‘monkey pose’ as shown opposite, pressing down into the legs as we follow the steps outlined above.

In short for UB: Hold the breath out, adopt JB, to protect the brain from excessive pressure and keep prana vayu in the body, and initiate UB, which will in effect pull up the pelvic floor into MB. **Find your own level for retention where the body, breath and mind remain relaxed.**



To exit: When ready to release slowly release MB, UB, JB and then inhale. Note that sometimes exhaling what breath remains can help us to more smoothly inhale afterwards.

Precautions & Prohibitions

Because we are holding the breath out, in bahya kumbhaka, and significantly increasing internal pressure there are many cautions including menstruation, pregnancy, high blood pressure, heart conditions, abdominal conditions & surgery, inflammatory digestive conditions, and urinary problems.

Students should also, as always, be encouraged to listen to their body, breath and mind, and notice the effects afterwards, desisting if there is any discomfort experienced.

Note: It is often easier to learn standing although for pranayama purposes it is performed in a cross legged asana.

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[nala = rectus abdomini or tubular vessel]

Technique

Nauli is the practice of drawing the abdominal muscles into UB then projecting the rectus abdominis (R.A.) muscles forwards, & expanding and contracting the two different sides independantly, so they move from side to side in a wave-like manner.

At first we stand in 'monkey pose' with bent knees with hands to thighs, only when experienced do we sit for the practice. We perform jalanadhara bandha (neck lock), on the held out breath then uddiyana bandha (abdominal lock) whilst retaining the out breath; we begin by learning to **isolate each R.A. by pressing downwards on the same side leg as we lift the hand on the opposite side** which isolates the R.A. on the side where the hand is pressed against the leg. We can work with this for a while resting between each isolation of the R.A. To release we simply release MB, UB, then JB, then standing up tall we exhale a little more if possible and then inhale through the nose, taking several ordinary breaths.

We can progress by beginning to roll the muscles whilst still using the downwards pressure on the legs then eventually roll the muscles without using the pressure downwards through hands. Note that some practitioners prefer to focus their attention on each hip, isolating the same side of the R.A. as they move the hips from side to side, we must however keep the shoulders and ribcage still.

This practice where the abdominals are rolled from side to side is known as Laulika in the Gherandha Samhita. There is also a similar practice named Agnisara, also found with the G.S. where we adopt uddiyana bandha then flap the abdominals forwards and backwards.

Progression:

1. First we can learn to exhale whilst keeping the ribcage expanded as for an inhale.
2. We then must be able to apply jalandhara bandha whilst we practice uddiyana bandha; JB is essential to protect the brain from any rising heat.
3. Then it is possible to practice agnisara where we allow the rectus abdominis to contract & relax as it keep the breath held out.
4. We may then be ready to work as above with nauli. (aka Laulika)

Benefits

Nauli gives a very powerful massage to the intestines and digestive organs, increasing the jathara agni or strength of the digestive fire, promoting the absorption and assimilation of nutrients. It brings new energy to the internal organs and a concentration of prana to the area of the solar plexus. It stimulates metabolism and is said to alleviates chest and abdominal disorders; particularly excess wind, indigestion, acidity etc. It helps develop an inner feeling of deep satisfaction helping to curb the roller coaster of emotions, it is also said to curb sexual desires. Nauli helps to reduce the accumulation of all doshas, being a tri-doshic practice. It also produces pressure within internal cavities helping the uptake of fluids into the colon when performing other kriya such as vasti.

Precautions & Prohibitions

This is a very strong practice, which must be considered advanced. It is prohibited for high blood pressure, heart conditions, any abdominal conditions such as gastric ulcers or respiratory problems such as hernias. It should not be performed when pregnant or menstruating and many authorities state it is not always a helpful practice for women since the internal massaging effect is too great for the more vulnerable female abdominal organs.

See HYP chapter 2 v33 & 34 for more information

See YouTube <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PcvYky7p5iE> for a good example of uddiyana bandha, followed by agnisara and then by nauli

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