



Role Of Relaxation Techniques In Pregnancy -A Review Article

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Abstract:

Relaxation therapy is a broad term used to describe a number of techniques that promote the elimination of tension through the body by reducing stress and make peace and calmness of mind. The aim of relaxation therapy is to make the mind quiet and to allow thoughts to flow in a smoother level to induce the relaxation response.

Pregnancy is time of joy and fulfillment, however stress of daily life do not affect during this time, moreover pregnant woman has had to accept some of restrictions such as lifestyle modifications, dietary changes, restricted physical activity and workplace adjustments etc. On the addition specific factors include physiological & anatomical changes, along with special care & concern regarding safe pregnancy and labor, and bother related to parenting and wellness of child, all these factors together lead to a emotional distress during pregnancy, for some pregnant woman this condition may lead to challenging to adjust with this stress response of the body. Hence relaxation therapy could be useful tool and regular practice of these techniques helps to reduce stress symptoms related to pregnancy and ensure better health for mother and baby.

Introduction : Relaxation¹ is a state of body and mind which is free from anxiety, tension and stress. It is a procedure or activity that helps to relax the person and to attain a state of calmness.

Pregnancy² is the term use to describe the period in which a foetus develops inside a woman's uterus usually lasts about 40 weeks, as measured from the last menstrual period to delivery. As mother undergoes significant anatomical and physiological changes in order to nurture and accommodate the developing foetus these changes begin after conception and affect every organ system in the body, these process and series of changes that take place in a woman's organs and tissues as a result of a developing foetus may leads stress in pregnancy. That may lead to adverse outcomes for mothers and children. Stress during pregnancy sometimes lead to pregnancy complications or have an impact on the baby.

As per the study conducted on perceived stress and its associated factors among the pregnant woman shows that 33.3% prevalence rate seen in India, 34.2% in Nepal, 75.6% in Ireland, 33.4% in Saudi Arabia, 6% in USA and 5.5% in Iran. The prevalence of stress during pregnancy range from 5.5% to 78%³.

Keywords: Relaxation Techniques, pregnancy, stress, anxiety.

Aims and Objectives:

1) To evaluate the role of relaxation techniques in pregnancy.

Materials and Methods: DC Dutta's textbook of OBSTETRICS, YIC Practical book by Dr H R Nagendra and Net source.

Review : Stress³ is the body's reaction with regards to threat or pressure. Some common⁴ causes of stress during pregnancy includes uncomfortable physical changes like nausea, tiredness, mood swings, backache and being pregnant can bring some of emotions including feeling anxious or stressed, fear of pregnancy loss, labor and delivery. For some women finding out that they are pregnant can be a stressful experience in itself because having pregnancy that is unplanned, or becoming pregnant after previous negative experiences such as a miscarriage or the death of a baby. High levels of stress that continue for a long time may cause health problems like, high blood pressure and heart disease. And also increase the chances of having a premature baby or a low-birthweight baby.

Symptoms of Stress:

1. The stressors- any event, factor or situation that can trigger stress.

2. Perceived stress- the analysis of the aggravation and perception of the individuals as a threat.

3. Stress Response – Activation of the body's sympathetic nervous system this results in the physical and physiological symptoms of stress.

Physical symptoms – increased heart rate (palpitation), increased respiratory rate (fast breathing) and muscle tension.

Psychological symptoms – feeling of worry and anxiety.

Relaxation Techniques⁴:

These techniques are beneficial, when they practice regularly in shavasana. These not only control symptoms and also improve general health and well being and resilience to stress.

There are two relaxation techniques:

1. Quick relaxation technique.

2. Deep relaxation technique.

1) Quick relaxation technique:

It is one variation of relaxing the entire physical body while focusing on the breathing. The flow of breath into the body and out of the body through the nostrils is given importance in this method.

Lie down in shavasana, feel the abdominal movements; observe the movements of abdominal muscles going up and down as you breathe in and out normally. Synchronize the abdominal movements with deep breathing. The abdomen bulges up with inhalation and sinks down with exhalation. Take a slow deep breath in and then slowly exhale, just allow any tension to melt away as you gradually relax more and more deeply with each breath. It is done for 5min.

Benefit – it helps to relax the body to make it calm and improve the blood circulation.

2) Deep relaxation technique:

Deep relaxation technique as the name suggests is a deeper and more intense form of relaxation. The entire body and mind move together, connecting with each other while the breathing plays a crucial role to bring this connection.

Gently close your eyes, legs apart, hands apart and palms facing towards ceiling, move your whole body make yourself comfortable and relax completely. Bring your awareness to the tip of the toes take deep breath, as you inhale gently move your toes, as you exhale feel the relaxation of the toes, bring the awareness towards ankle joints breath in and tighten ankle joints, as you exhale feel the relaxation of ankle joints, bring awareness towards calf muscles inhale tighten your calf muscles, as you exhale feel the relaxation of calf muscles, Bring awareness to knee joint inhale and slowly exhale and relax the knee joints, now bring awareness to thigh muscles, exhale and relax your thigh muscles, bring focus to hip region and feel the relax of hip region, bring awareness to pelvic region and waist region n relax, now totally relax the lower part of the body, inhale take a deep breath as you exhale chant “Aaa kara” and feel the vibration in the lower parts of the body, resonance will reach each n every cell of lower part of your body.

Gently bring your awareness towards abdomen region, observe abdominal movements, as inhale expand your stomach as you exhale relax your abdominal muscles, as you inhale expand your chest as you exhale relax your chest muscles, gently bring awareness to lower back and feel the relaxation of spine, relax muscles n nerves around lower back, bring awareness to upper back inhale n relax while exhale, shift awareness to tip of fingers n relax each fingers, bring awareness to wrist and elbow joints and relax, inhale take a deep breath as you exhale and chant “om kara” feel the vibration in the middle part of body, resonance reaches to each and every cell of abdomen part.

Gently bring your awareness to head region, relax your chin, relax your lower jaw and upper jaw, lower and upper gums, lower and upper teeth and relax your tongue, , bring awareness to mouth, nose and relax, now focus on eyes and ear n relax, relax your facial muscles carry beautiful smile on your face, relax completely. Now inhale and take deep breath chant “ma kara” while exhale ,feel the resonance in head region n feel the relaxation, observe the whole body from toes to head n feel the relaxation of whole body, now take deep breath and chant “Aa”, “Om” and “Ma” kara and feel the relaxation. It is done longer and is generally done for 15m.

Benefit: it gives calmness to the mind and body.

Result: Initiating these techniques in early pregnancy could improve obstetric and development outcomes both mother and her fetus.

Discussion: In pregnancy increased sympathetic activity and decreased parasympathetic activity will be seen. The balanced state of body is maintained by the interactions between these two sympathetic nervous system and parasympathetic nervous system, They act on the same organs of the body but initiate opposite functions. when the SNS is activated then the PNS is inhibited, SNS causes “fight or flight” response, where as PNS promotes the relaxation response or “Rest and Digest phase”, stress symptoms will arrive due to the activation of Sympathetic nervous system therefore the stress management strategies involve the activation of the parasympathetic nervous system. This is carried out through the activation of different parts of the brain, by practicing 8 relaxation techniques as these methods will bring awareness to each part of the body, which are related to the effective function of the parasympathetic nervous system. Relaxation achieves the opposite physical and psychological effects of stress, and therefore relaxation is required for good health in addition to sleep and physical rest.

Conclusion: These techniques are beneficial, when they practice regularly. These not only control symptoms and also improve general health and well being of mother and baby.

References:

- 1) <https://en.m.wikipedia.org>.
- 2) <https://www.nichd.nih.gov>
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- 4) YIC practical book by Dr H R Nagendra