

Parasympathetic & Sympathetic Nervous Systems

The Autonomic Nervous System (ANS) controls the activities of organs, glands, and various involuntary muscles, such as cardiac and smooth muscles.

The ANS has 2 main divisions:

- ❶ The **Parasympathetic Nervous System** activates tranquil functions, such as the secretion of saliva or digestive enzymes into the stomach. It complements the Sympathetic system. The practice of yoga stimulates the Parasympathetic division of the system and has stress-reducing effects such as, lowering blood pressure, promoting relaxation and improving the body's ability to heal.
- ❷ The **Sympathetic Nervous System** is involved in the stimulation of activities that prepare the body for action, such as increasing heart rate, increasing the release of sugar from the liver into the blood, and other **fight-or-flight responses**. Yoga has been shown to reduce the fight or flight response, removing the constant muscular tension produced by repeated alerts to fight or flee, as well as calming a racing heart, reducing anxiety and reducing the intensity and frequency of other Sympathetic nervous system responses.

