

Topic of the Week

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WE CARE ABOUT YOUR HEALTH

Yoga Renews Both Mind and Body

Presented by: Mark J. Glesener, DC

Yoga has undergone a resurgence in popularity in the last couple of years. It's proven as an effective method to develop flexibility and balance as well as relax your body from stress. The deep breathing distributes more oxygen throughout your body. Yoga's postures can also help you develop core muscle strength, which improves posture and takes stress off your musculoskeletal system. But see your chiropractor regularly to ensure this or other physical activities are in fact helping your body and not causing damage due to improper techniques.

As the science of the West investigates the health practices of the East, we're discovering more health secrets of ancient disciplines like yoga. Let's look at the research on yoga - some of which may surprise you!

Low Back Benefits

Boston University of Medicine conducted a 26-week yoga study on low back pain sufferers. Participants were divided into two groups. One group did yoga classes for 12 weeks while another group received standard medical treatment. The yoga participants kept track of their pain level with diaries.

After the research period, the yoga group reported that pain intensity dropped by 1/3. The control group saw only a 5% reduction in pain. As well, the yoga participants need for pain medication fell a whopping 80%!¹

In a randomized controlled trial published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*, researchers tested three sets of patients who all suffered low back pain. The first group performed viniyoga with instructor-led classes as well as practicing at home. The second group practiced aerobic, strength training and stretching. And the third group was given a self-care book on back pain.²

At the 12-week point in the study, the yoga group had better back function compared to the other two groups. And after the research was completed, the yoga patients had less back pain than the self-care patients. As well, only 21% of the yoga participants required pain meds compared to 50% for the exercise participants and 59% for the self-care participants.

The study authors remarked, "...the mental focus induced by yoga could also help people to increase their awareness of how they had been moving and positioning their body in maladaptive ways, to relax muscles, and to relieve mental stress..."²

Exercise of the Week

Lumbar stabilization (stage 4)

Difficulty: Moderate

(Consult your chiropractor before engaging in this or any other exercise.)

Start: On hands and knees. Be aware of position of spine – start with a neutral spine or a flat back. Engage inner abdominal muscles by bringing belly button inward. Lift opposite arm/leg to position shown in figure 2.

Exercise: Keeping torso steady, bring elbow and knee of opposite sides to touch underneath body. Hold for one second, then return them to starting position with arm/leg outstretched. Hold for one second, then repeat for 5-10 repetitions. Switch arm/leg, and perform exercise for 5-10 repetitions.



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Freedom from Fear of Falling

In one of the most interesting yoga studies, researchers at Indiana University conducted a 12-week hatha yoga program with 14 men and women (the average age for participants was 78). They attended twice weekly yoga classes taught by a professional yoga instructor. At the end of the study, the participants reported “reduced fear of falling, increased lower body flexibility and a reduction in their leisure constraints.”³

Fear of falling is a primary concern of many older adults, even if they’ve never actually experienced a fall, and it hinders their physical and social activity. It appears this gentle style of yoga may be an excellent way for seniors to maintain a good quality of life.

Body Awareness Helps with Eating Disorders

Perhaps the most surprising research about yoga is its potential impact on eating disorders. A study published in *Psychology of Woman Quarterly* looked at a demographic of women who have a higher likelihood of developing an eating disorder. Those women that practiced yoga reported improved body satisfaction and fewer symptoms of eating disorders compared to a second group of women who did mainstream aerobic exercise.⁴

The increased body awareness from yoga may strengthen a positive self-acceptance of your body, rather than trying to achieve an impossible “ideal” figure.



Women, Cancer and Mental Health

Women with cancer may see psychological benefits with yoga. A mental health study looked at women diagnosed with breast cancer. One set of participants practiced gentle restorative yoga and another set of participants served as the control group. The yoga group reported significant improvement in mood, less fatigue and reduced stress compared to the other group. Women who rated as having low emotional well being at the beginning of the study reported the most emotional benefit at the conclusion of the study.⁵

* * *

Some styles of yoga and/or postures may not be suitable if you suffer from certain musculoskeletal problems, so first discuss your fitness plans with your chiropractor. If yoga causes you pain or aggravates any health condition, stop and consult your chiropractor right away.

Quote of the Week

“Learn to relax. Your body is precious, as it houses your mind and spirit. Inner peace begins with a relaxed body.”

- Norman Vincent Peale

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