

Editorial Note on Alternative & Integrative Medicine - Yoga

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Abstract

Yoga is an ancient art based on a harmonizing system of development for the body, mind, and spirit. An ascetic Hindu discipline involving controlled breathing, prescribed body positions, and meditation, with the goal of attaining a state of deep spiritual insight and tranquillity. Yoga therapy may be defined as the application of Yogic principles to a particular person with the objective of achieving a particular spiritual, psychological, or physiological goal. The means employed are comprised of intelligently conceived steps that include but are not limited to the components of Ashtānga Yoga, which includes the educational teachings of yama, niyama, āsana, prānāyāma, pratyāhāra, dhāranā, dhyāna, and samādhi.

Keywords: Yoga • Alternative

Introduction

Like yoga, the osteopathic approach to wellness focuses on your body's natural tendency toward health and self-healing. "The purpose of yoga is to build strength, awareness and harmony in both the mind and body," explains Natalie Nevins, DO, a board-certified osteopathic family physician and certified Kundalini Yoga instructor in Hollywood, California. While there are more than 100 different types, or schools, of yoga, most sessions typically include breathing exercises, meditation, and assuming postures (sometimes called asana or poses) that stretch and flex various muscle groups. "As an osteopathic physician, I focus a lot of my efforts on preventive medicine and practices, and in the body's ability to heal itself," says Dr. Nevins. "Yoga is a great tool for staying healthy because it's based on similar principles." Doctors of Osteopathic Medicine, or DOs, focus on prevention by examining how your lifestyle and environment impact your health, rather than just treating your symptoms.

Beginners Welcome

Because there are so many different kinds of yoga practices, it is possible for anyone to start. "Whether you're a couch potato or a professional athlete, size and fitness levels do not matter because there are modifications for every yoga pose and beginner classes in every style," says Dr. Nevins. "The idea is to explore your limits, not strive for some pretzel-like perfection. It is a great way to get in tune with your body and your inner self."

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Received 20 February 2020; **Accepted** 20 February 2021; **Published** 24 February 2021

Physical Benefits

"The relaxation techniques incorporated in yoga can lessen chronic pain, such as lower back pain, arthritis, headaches and carpal tunnel syndrome," explains Dr. Nevins. "Yoga can also lower blood pressure and reduce insomnia."

Other physical benefits of yoga include:

- increased flexibility
- increased muscle strength and tone
- improved respiration, energy and vitality
- maintaining a balanced metabolism
- weight reduction
- cardio and circulatory health
- improved athletic performance
- protection from injury

Mental Benefits

Aside from the physical benefits, one of the best benefits of yoga is how it helps a person manage stress, which is known to have devastating effects on the body and mind. "Stress can reveal itself in many ways, including back or neck pain, sleeping problems, headaches, drug abuse, and an inability to concentrate," says Dr. Nevins. "Yoga can be very effective in developing coping skills and reaching a more positive outlook on life."

Yoga's incorporation of meditation and breathing can help improve a person's mental well-being. "Regular yoga practice creates mental clarity and calmness; increases body awareness; relieves chronic stress patterns; relaxes the mind; centers attention; and sharpens concentration," says Dr. Nevins. Body- and self-awareness are particularly beneficial, she adds, "because they can help with early detection of physical problems and allow for early preventive action."

Related Journals of Yoga

Alternative Health Care Journals, Alternative Medicine Journals, Yoga & Physical Therapy, International journal of yoga therapy, Alternative and Complementary Therapies, Alternative Therapies in Health and Medicine, BMC Complementary and Alternative Medicine, Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine

