

The Wellness Family

Dr. Chang Keeps You Informed

Yoga for All Ages

Yoga is defined as a philosophy teaching the suppression of all activity of body, mind and will in order that the self may realize its distinction from them and attain liberation. However, it has also been defined as a system of exercises for attaining bodily or mental control and well-being. For more than 5,000 years the art of Yoga has been benefitting the body and mind of those choosing this positive form of exercise.

Types of Yoga

There are many different types of Yoga and with each there is a different benefit. While Yoga continues to evolve to meet the needs of every individual, the most popular form of Yoga is Hatha Yoga. This branch of Yoga focuses on the physical well-being of a person and believes that the body is the vehicle of the spirit.

A lot of different Yoga Styles are rooted from Hatha Yoga but they all aim to balance the mind, the body and the spirit through the Asanas or poses. The difference in the style of Yoga will determine where the focus lies: in the balance and alignment of the body or the coordination of breath and movement.

Ananda

This classic style of Hatha Yoga uses Asanas (or poses) and Pranayama (or controlled breathing) to stimulate and begin to control the subtle energies within oneself. The object of this style is to harmonize the body, mind and emotions, but above all to bring oneself to a higher level of awareness.

The unique feature of this style is the use of silent affirmations while in the poses as a means of working more directly and consciously with the subtle energies or Chakras within to achieve attunement. This Yoga style is a gentle, inward experience as opposed to athletic or aerobic.

Ashtanga

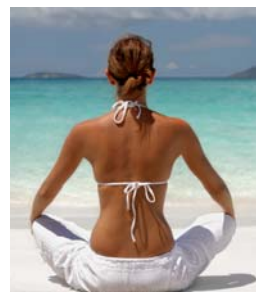
Sometimes called "Power Yoga" this is for those who are seeking a more serious workout. Moving through a series of flows and jumping from one posture to another in order to build strength, flexibility and stamina, those participating in this form of Yoga will find it physically demanding.

Ashtanga Yoga involves performing challenging flows of postures while focusing on the breathing, and uses six series of increased difficulty. This style is not for beginners and should not be attempted by anyone who is not already physically fit and exercises regularly.

Iyengar

Named after B. K. S. Iyengar, one of the most well-known Yoga teachers, this style focuses mostly on precision in movement and correct body alignment. When discussing Yoga the word "alignment" generally refers to the precise way in which the body should be positioned in each pose in order to obtain the maximum benefit while avoiding injury.

With this style of Yoga the poses will be held longer and repeated several times as opposed to moving quickly from one pose to the next in a flow. Iyengar is



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also reputed to be one of the few Yoga styles that encourages the use of props as a means to bring the body into alignment.

Fun and Beneficial for All Ages

Yoga has seen a huge resurgence over the past few years as many have come to recognize its benefits regardless of age. Yoga classes can be found in most communities for children as young as two or three, and adult classes rarely have age restrictions.

It has been discovered that, since the basic concept behind Yoga is a pose that resembles something of nature, a child's limitless imagination makes Yoga an adventure; one minute they can be a tree and the next a turtle. Yoga stimulates the imagination while incorporating movement and breathing without the stress and competition of most other forms of exercise promoted for children.

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As the popularity of Yoga has increased so has an awareness of the benefits that far outreach typical childhood competitive sports. These benefits include improved motor skills and concentration, a sense of calmness and relaxation as well as better posture and breathing; making Yoga especially beneficial for children displaying symptoms of Asthma. Additionally, the physical benefits included: increased flexibility, strength, coordination and awareness of the body.

On the opposite end of the age spectrum the benefits for men and women over the age of 60 are equally compelling. These include increased joint flexibility and a reduction in the symptoms of arthritis or bursitis. Proven health benefits include a reduction in high blood pressure, an improvement in blood circulation, decreased body fat and an increase in lean body tissue. Additionally, many symptoms that have been accepted as a natural part of growing older have been reduced or even relieved all together, these include:

- Osteoporosis
- Low back pain
- Breathing difficulties
- Vision problems
- Chronic pain
- Stress-related symptoms
- Insomnia or lack of peaceful rest

Of course, some Yoga styles are designed purely for the benefit of relaxation, but many have been designed to exercise the body while incorporating challenging poses. These styles of Yoga will have many health benefits including:

- Flexibility – the poses work by safely stretching your muscles releasing built-up lactic acid that builds up with muscle use and causes stiffness, tension, pain and fatigue
- Strength – the more vigorous Yoga styles will quickly build muscle tone and yet, even the less spirited styles will still increase endurance

- Breathing – because of the deep and focused breathing involved in Yoga there is usually an increase in lung capacity
- Heart Benefits – Yoga has long been known to lower blood pressure and slow the heart rate; and a slower heart rate can be beneficial for those with hypertension, heart disease and stroke
- Other Medical Conditions – Yoga has proven beneficial for those with asthma, back pain, arthritis, insomnia, multiple sclerosis and depression

At the physical level, Yoga and its practices have proven to be extremely valuable and beneficial.

Wii Fit

A great deal of fuss has been made about the new Wii Fitness and especially its Yoga “game”. While the balance board has proven useful in measuring the accuracy of the poses, there is no coaching for the breathing techniques or mental focus.

Additionally, many Yoga instructors have found that the need to hold the controller and interrupt the flow to move on to the next Asana is highly distracting and takes away from the experience of Yoga.

Finally, there is very little aerobic benefit as the necessity of stopping every now and then to change the stage of the game limits continuous exercise.

The Chiropractic Factor

As with any new exercise regimen it's important to speak with your Family Wellness Chiropractor first, as your ability to successfully engage in Yoga will be determined by your current physical fitness and stamina. Be aware that many styles of Yoga are challenging and can lead to injury if practiced without proper training and supervision.

Dear Patient,

Dr. Chang is dedicated to providing you with the absolute best in family wellness care. So take a moment today to discuss with your Family Wellness Chiropractor any concerns you may have regarding your family's physical activity.

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