

Yes, You Can Learn Yoga!

By Barry Craft



Your quick reference guide to getting started with Yoga.

Learn the health benefits of yoga, using yoga for weight loss, yoga basics, types of yoga classes, finding the right yoga teacher, types of yoga equipment and much more!

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Introduction

I have often been asked by people of all ages how to get started in the practice of yoga. Many people also have questions about what type of yoga class is best for them, what type of equipment is needed and how to find the right yoga teacher. These are all really good questions which I will attempt to answer in this report.

Since I want this information to be applicable to the greatest number of people, I have also included a section on Yoga for Men, Yoga for Women, Yoga for Seniors, and Yoga for Children. I have had a few requests to include a section on Yoga for Dogs which may be in the next release (just kidding!).

All joking aside, I want to make a disclaimer here. I am not a healthcare professional so this information is for education purposes only and I make no claims regarding the suitability for you since I don't know your physical condition or lifestyle. I just know many people have benefited from practicing yoga. It's always a good idea to speak to your physician before beginning any type of exercise or fitness program. Okay, enough of the legal stuff.

Before I go any further, I would like to thank the following authors for their knowledge and generosity in contributing articles for this project:

Della Menechella from <http://www.beauty-fitness-yoga-source.com>

Paul Jerard from <http://www.yoga-teacher-training.org>

Roy Thomsitt from <http://www.routes-to-self-improvement.com>

Anastasia Dorohova from <http://www.steadybliss.com>

The Health Benefits of Yoga

I would first like to speak about the health benefits of yoga since that is one of the areas that people are most concerned with. Yoga practitioners often speak about a unification of the body, mind and spirit acquired through practicing the yoga exercises and techniques. This is thought to [relieve stress](#) and bring one more in touch with their inner peace.

One of the core beliefs that yogi share is that the mind and the body are a united entity, which can find its harmony and it can heal itself, when being in a proper environment. As a result of these fundamental principles, and their corresponding effects, many doctors consider yoga as having therapeutic benefits, and recommend it for curing a series of illnesses, mainly related to the nervous system. Although this practice does not always work, many people often find relief from many aches and pains especially those associated with growing older.

Yoga is definitely not a philosophy that has been developed in recent times. Yoga has been practiced for thousands of years and during all this time, countless people have benefited from the great health and psychological results obtained. Furthermore, they conducted studies, in order to clearly determine the areas in which people can obtain the greatest health benefits, by an extended practice. The information obtained after conducting the investigations was grouped in three categories, establishing that yoga practitioners are likely to observe improvements in what concerns physiological, psychological, biochemical aspects.

From the physiological point of view, practicing yoga for longer durations can help cure pulse rate decreases, respiratory and blood pressure dysfunctions, it can contribute to stabilizing the nervous system equilibrium, to normalizing gastrointestinal functions and endocrine function, to increasing the joint range of motions, endurance level, energy level, immunity to diseases and cardiovascular efficiency, to improving eye-hand coordination, reaction time, dexterity skills, depth perception, sleep, etc.

The psychological benefits of yoga in the second category, points out that yoga can also contribute to increasing somatic and kinesthetic awareness, [self-acceptance and self-actualization](#), improved social skills, well-being, as well as to improving concentration, memory, attention, mood, and learning efficiency.

The biochemical benefits of yoga can produce substantial decreases of glucose, sodium, cholesterol, total white blood cell and remarkable increases of vitamin C, total serum protein and hemoglobin.

In addition, there have been various studies showing that [yoga exercises](#) are extremely effective when it comes to increasing the level of joint flexibility, together with the level of lubrication of joints, ligaments and tendons. Another interesting consideration has to do with the fact that yoga is one of the very few techniques, which contributes to massaging all the internal organs and glands, many of which are hardly ever stimulated during the lifetime of a person, such as the prostate. The stimulation and massaging of the internal organs proves to be beneficial when it comes to preventing and diseases and increasing vitality.

Furthermore, these ancient and efficient techniques virtually guarantee a complete detoxification of your body. When stretching the muscles and performing a thorough massage, you ensure the optimum quantity of blood supply you need, as a result of the complexity of the yoga exercises. As a consequence, toxins are eliminated from your body and certain undesired processes, such as aging, are considerably deferred.

Many people have also found that yoga can be a great [stress reliever](#) even when practiced in short sessions.

Besides all the mental and physical benefits of yoga that I've listed above, many people are interested in yoga specifically for weight loss and as a refreshing break from the traditional gym workout. It is certainly possible to lose and [maintain your weight using yoga](#). Although the results may not happen as quickly as some other forms of exercise, the benefits are usually more wide spread and last much longer. The following article from Roy Thomsitt describes some of the key features of using yoga as part of your [weight loss program](#).

Yoga As An Aid To Weight Loss

By Roy Thomsitt

Yoga is wonderful for nurturing a state of mental and physical well being. It promotes a balanced and healthy lifestyle, and yoga techniques can be applied also to removing excess weight, thus bringing you an extra benefit, that is if being overweight is a problem to you.

Practicing yoga will increase your metabolism. An increased metabolism leads to an increase in the calorie burning process, so combining yoga with a calorie burning program may bring you excellent results. Of course, the use of yoga is no rapid weight loss method. Used over a period of time, though, it can bring good results. If you keep to the rigors imposed by yoga discipline, you should gain a holistic, long term solution to balance your life style and help you reduce and prevent any surplus weight. In addition to losing weight, you will also experience an increased ability to concentrate and focus, higher resistance to stress factors, and overall a healthier way of life.

Let me just explain a little more about how yoga will benefit you. Your metabolism is regulated by the thyroid, a component of the endocrine system. The thyroid is responsible for the chemical processes in your body that transform food into energy. Yoga uses a series of twisting poses that stimulate the work flow of the internal organs, thus boosting metabolism. This in turn burns more calories, and reduces your body weight. Improved local blood circulation is another direct effect of the use of yoga postures, which leads to a healthier, more energetic body. When the calorie intake is lower than the calorie output, your body will start burning fat cells to acquire the necessary energy. A perfectly healthy and strong metabolism takes this process even further, and you may well see better results than traditional weight loss formulas.

To stimulate metabolism, various back bends and forward bends are used. Poses that affect the neck area, where the thyroid gland is situated, are particularly helpful if the weight problem is caused by a hormonal imbalance. These poses can be those of the camel, rabbit, plow, bridge and shoulder stand. Moving quickly between a series of poses can accelerate the process. To those who are well overweight, some of the bends may prove to be a difficult. If you fall into that category, don't despair. You should gradually increase the difficulty of the postures until you have the confidence to go to more complex exercises. This is not a test or a competition; you need to be relaxed and at ease, and just do what you can. Each time, you will probably find it that much easier, and you can do a little more.

To strengthen muscles, you use standing poses, such as the warrior. The use of standing poses will aid a higher level of endurance, and an increased caloric output. You may energize the body and increase your metabolism even more by using Kapalabhati and Ujjayi Pranayama.

A good diet should also be followed to support this holistic weight loss system. You should try to eat foods that are rich in fiber, vegetables, fruit, whole grains, while eating less high fat and processed food items. Balance is essential in all matters concerning your diet. variety is good, as is modest consumption.

A gradual approach is essential with all yoga practices. Do not expect results to be spectacular and immediate, but this is one of the best long term weight loss methods available. In addition to weight loss, you can also benefit from an increased protection against adverse factors through your improved immune system and sense of well being. Hopefully, too, you will feel an inner peace that will assist you in losing weight without succumbing to all the pressures and temptations.

Roy Thomsitt is owner and part author of <http://www.routes-to-self-improvement.com>

Hopefully that article has provided some inspiration and cleared up any misconceptions you may have had on [yoga for weight loss](#). As we move along, I feel it is good time now to discuss some of the basic principles of yoga so that you may have a better understanding of its potential.

Basic Principles of Yoga

Yoga practices can produce quite a range of amazing benefits. However, in order to get the maximum results highly appreciated by devoted yoga practitioners, there are a series of fundamental principles that any yogi has to respect and practice regularly.

Most of these rules are related to [proper relaxation methods](#), to the right techniques of breathing, the proper diet practitioners should follow and, lastly to thinking positively and trying to meditate objectively on the surrounding realities.

Generally speaking, all yoga principles underline the importance of self-discipline, self-control, self-determination and focus, as important methods of achieving the status promoted by the yoga ideology. Although at the beginning, yogi might feel overwhelmed with the richness and the vastness philosophy and practice of yoga, there is however, a series of basic principles, which can help early stage yoga practitioners understand better this ideology.

Here are some of the fundamental principles of this philosophical practice:

- Total relaxation of your body and mind is required in order to revitalize your nervous system, achieve inner peace and feel relaxed and refreshed. There can be no physical relaxation without the mental; no mental relaxation without the physical.

- Your body was designed to move and exercise, which is why, by correctly [practicing the yoga exercises](#), including stretching and toning your muscles, you can increase the flexibility of your joints and spines and contribute to improving your blood circulation. As you begin your first Deep Relaxation exercises, try to bear in mind that the object of what you will do is to quiet your nerves and rest your body by ridding yourself of all conscious tension and contraction.
- Furthermore, it is vital to learn how to breathe correctly while [performing the yoga movements](#), so that you may achieve the desired state of harmony and purification. Rhythmic and full breathing, using the lungs entirely, in order to increase the quantity of oxygen you intake, is the most recommended. The breathing techniques promoted by yogi have the purpose of relaxing your mind and increasing your energy level.
- Yogis are convinced that what we eat strongly affects our [spiritual awareness](#), which is why when practicing yoga, it is highly recommended to watch your diet. It is clear that the things we eat nourish both our body, as well as our soul, and as a consequence, a balanced diet, based on natural products is a top priority. Proper eating implies not the things you eat, but it also involves eating moderately and only when you are hungry. After all, there is no logic in eating only for lack of other activities. Additionally this habit can lead to obesity and many other undesirable side effects.
- Many philosophical concepts, including yoga practices, state that the manner in which we think strongly affects our way of living. I am a firm believer in this concept. As a result, it is always recommended to [meditate on positive events](#) and to try to eliminate any negative thoughts, in order to gain control over your own mind.

As a final conclusion, it is vital to understand and be aware of the above mentioned principles, in order to maximize the positive effects of your yoga practice.

Okay, now that we have established many of the positive health benefits of yoga and some of the basics, let's learn about some of the various types of yoga classes available and see which style might be right for you. The following article by Della Menechella provides an overview of some of the main styles of yoga so that you can see what class suits you best.

Which Type of Yoga is the Right Choice for You?

By Della Menechella

You finally made the decision to practice yoga, but which style of yoga is the best one for you? There are many types of yoga, and while they usually have common elements, their focus is often quite different. If you have not been physically active in a long time, then one of the more gentle, slower moving styles may be right for you. If you are an athlete or are very physically fit, you might want to check out some of the more strenuous forms.

The following is a list of the more common yoga classes that you will find.

Hatha Yoga

Almost every style of yoga practiced in the west is some form of Hatha Yoga. It includes asanas, breathing exercises, relaxation, and meditation. Each of the individual forms of yoga has a different emphasis, but classes usually include some combination of these elements.

Ashtanga

This is a very fast paced, intense style of yoga. It follows a series of postures, which are always done in the same order and are connected with the breath. Each posture flows directly into the next one, so it is a very demanding practice. Ashtanga can be a good choice for physically fit individuals who like a challenge.

Iyengar

This type of yoga, which was developed by B.K.S. Iyengar, is focused on proper body alignment. Poses are held for long periods of time and the movement from one posture to another is slower than some other styles. Props are often used to help maintain proper alignment, so Iyengar can be a good choice for those who have physical limitations. Since it focuses so much on correct body alignment, it is also a good starting point for beginners before they move into faster paced styles.

Bikram

This style of yoga was created by Bikram Choudhury and is also known as 'hot yoga.' Classes are held in rooms heated up to 100 degrees in order to allow your body to stretch without injury and release toxins. Practitioners move through a series of twenty-six postures, with each one being held for a period of time. This is a strenuous style and should be avoided by people with certain health conditions unless they get clearance from their medical professional.

Power Yoga

This is an intense workout that is a hybrid of Ashtanga, because the postures do not necessarily follow a particular sequence every time. Asanas move from one to another and they require a great deal of strength and stamina. Power yoga is best suited for athletic, well-conditioned individuals. It is my favorite type of yoga, and even though I am in excellent physical shape, I find it very challenging.

Kundalini

This type of yoga combines postures with specific breathing. Its purpose is to release the Kundalini energy that is housed at the base of the spine and allow it to move upward. Its ultimate goal is spiritual enlightenment.

Kripalu

This style of yoga is meditation in motion. Its goal is for the individual to gain a deeper inner awareness and to nurture a relationship with his or her body. Classes include gentle yoga postures with coordinated breathing and an emphasis on alignment. They also include an extended period of meditation and relaxation.

Integral

Created by Sri Swami Satchidananda, this type of yoga is very gentle. Classes have a greater emphasis on the meditative rather than the physical aspects of yoga. Integral Yoga is included in Dr. Dean Ornish's program, which has been shown to reverse heart disease.

Viniyoga

This style was created by T.K.V. Desikachar and is a therapeutic approach to yoga. It focuses on breathing in conjunction with movement. Viniyoga encourages modified postures to meet an individual's specific needs and abilities. It would be a valuable style for someone who is dealing with an injury or other physical restriction.

Once you've chosen a specific type of yoga, it doesn't mean you have to stay with it forever. You can choose to focus on another style for a while or mix several different types depending on how your mind and body feel. Whichever type you choose, the most important thing is to continue doing it on a regular basis so you can enjoy the rewards that yoga brings.

Della Menechella is a yoga and fitness enthusiast who has been involved in fitness for over thirty years. Her website <http://www.beauty-fitness-yoga-source.com/> is filled with practical information about how you can make yoga and fitness a positive part of your life. Visit the site and get your free meditation e-book.

As you can see from Della's article, there is a wide variety of yoga styles some of which are more or less suited your lifestyle and physical condition. The important thing is just get started doing something. You can always modify or change it later.

Okay, now that you've decided what type of class may be best for you, it's time to look for a yoga teacher. Since your yoga teacher is somewhat like a personal trainer, it is important to find one that is compatible with you personally and has your best professional interests at heart as well, which is not always an easy task. The following article from Paul Jerard offers some very good tips. Paul has been both a yoga student and teacher for many years so he really knows his stuff.

How to Find the Right Yoga Teacher?

By Paul Jerard

I am often asked by beginners about how to evaluate a Yoga Teacher?

The following is the "CALM check list." These factors are basic criteria that your Yoga Instructor should meet before you continue on to a second Yoga class.

CALM gets its name from four main factors: Communication, Assist, Listen, and Modification. For the right Yoga teacher, you should be answering with a "yes" to all questions.

- **Communication:** Does your Yoga teacher talk to you, and other students, in a manner of mutual respect? Can you ask a question during class time?

Does your teacher show compassion for you and other students? Does your Yoga teacher take the time to lead you through a guided meditation or relaxation? Meditation and relaxation are major aspects of Yoga practice.

There are Yoga teachers who just want to get "their workout" done. Beware of Yoga teachers, who are so important, they don't have time for you.

Some students love this air of superiority and, unfortunately, some people love abuse. If you want to learn Yoga, you need an open line of communication with your Yoga teacher.

• **Assist:** Does your teacher care about your form? Will your teacher give you a verbal or physical assist during your Yoga class? Are props encouraged in your Yoga classes?

Some students never have major problems with alignment and some do, but if your teacher doesn't give verbal cues, what does that tell you?

• **Listen:** Does your Yoga teacher take the time to listen to your feedback? Is your teacher "in the moment" with the class?

Once in a while, there is a Yoga instructor who runs, "The-it's-all-about-me-show." You are not going to learn anything from this type of teaching. Beginners will be put at risk, trying to keep up with a seasoned Yoga teacher who doesn't explain anything.

• **Modification:** Does your Yoga teacher allow modifications and props? If your teacher discourages props, you are in the wrong place.

Some students will need props for life depending upon their range of motion. Just because a teacher can do a posture without props, doesn't mean every student can.

Summary: Stay away from abusive Yoga teachers, and if you are attracted to abuse, there is always professional help. Some students crave "the stern, but loving parent" types. They will push you harder, but how much pushing do you really need?

Respect is a two way street, and you deserve as much respect as your Yoga teacher does. Let common sense be your guide. You should feel good after a Yoga class, and you might even feel muscle soreness days after a vigorous class.

Make sure your Yoga teacher meets the above criteria before making a commitment.

Paul Jerard, is a co-owner and the director of Yoga teacher training at: Aura Wellness Center in, North Providence, RI. He has been a certified Master Yoga teacher since 1995. He teaches Yoga, martial arts, and fitness to children, adults, and seniors in the greater Providence area. Recently he wrote: Is Running a Yoga Business Right for You? For Yoga students who may be considering a new career as a Yoga teacher. <http://www.yoga-teacher-training.org>

You're doing great so far! You are already half way through this report so let's keep going. You're probably excited about getting started with your yoga exercise program but not sure what you need to get started. No problem. It doesn't take much and we can cover that right now.

Yoga Equipment

The amount of preparation required for practicing yoga is very minimal. It is true that you have to watch your diet, but mental preparation is by far more important. Still, when it comes to yoga equipment, there are a few things to keep in mind. These things are not mandatory, but recommended, in order to increase the level of efficiency and comfort and provide a more relaxing experience.

Yoga Clothing

There are no strict rules regarding the type of clothes that one has to wear while performing yoga exercises. Nevertheless, it has been demonstrated that comfortable, loose, breathable clothes are the most convenient ones for carrying out this routine. Most people have found that attire such as sweat suits, shorts, pajamas and t-shirts are most desirable. As for certain exercises from a regular yoga routine your head comes below your knees, you might want to put on a t-shirt that is tight to your body.

Footwear for Yoga

As a general rule, yoga exercises are performed in bare feet. Most of the time, shoes are left near the entrance. To prevent discomforts caused by the cold sensations, you can put on light cotton socks if you prefer.

Yoga Mats

In a yoga room or studio it is likely to observe, a large number of yoga mats on the floor, each one for a different practitioner. These yoga mats are used for various reasons. First of all, they establish the personal space dedicated to each person. Hence, every practitioner can try to reach the state of harmony between the mind and the body, within the space allocated to him, space that he can control and dominate. Another relevant reason for using mats is related to the level of comfort. If you sweat your hands might get slippery and you might lose your stability. For that reason, a yoga mat could help you stay focused on the routine. If you are a beginner in yoga training, you have to deeply consider purchasing a mat, as the hard floor might be a serious cause of discomfort to you. Most yoga studios offer yoga mats for rent, for a dollar or two. However, most people like to purchase their own yoga mats, from the specialized stores.

Yoga Blankets

It is common for yoga studios to have enormous piles of blankets. Do not hesitate to grab one or two, as they can turn out to be handy during classes. They can either be used as props, while performing exercises in uncomfortable positions, or you can use them to cover yourself, during relaxation at the end of the class, in case you get chilly.

There are other elements such as blocks and straps, for example, which people use to improve their efficiency and level of comfort, while carrying out the yoga exercises.

Since there are men and women of all ages reading this guide and many of the concepts can benefit everyone, I would like to devote the following sections to addressing the more specific needs of those categories.

Yoga for Men

Yoga can be equally enjoyed by both men and women. Yoga for men may have some slightly different techniques due to physical strength and body design. All social categories and age groups can enjoy yoga as a hobby or even as a life style. Yoga practitioners have studied the physical and psychological differences between men and women for a long time.

In general, men are known to be less emotional than women and they often suppress their emotions. This can lead to stress and, ultimately to an increased risk of heart problems. Yoga exercise for men can often help decrease the amount of the man's stress and provide a greater sense of well being.

The higher physical strength of men is recognized by most dedicated yoga practices. This is why some of the poses dedicated to men involve more muscle power and stamina. Many male yoga practitioners have found that a combination of yoga and weight training can provide them with the necessary vitality and positive thinking. In many cases, the balance between mind and body is often broken by different adverse outside factors such as stress, pressure, social problems and so on. The close link between body and spirit can be often seen in such cases: if the spirit is defeated, the body will soon get ill and weakened.

That is why the more physical aspects of yoga are better suited to men. Society imposes certain standards and staying fit and looking good are just some of them. In order to possess self-confidence and respect for your own person, you need to take care of your body properly.

Some of the yoga poses you will read about later on in this article are great for keeping the body in perfect physical shape, especially when a balanced and nutritious diet is utilized. Needless to say that physical yoga training greatly reduces the chances of various illnesses such as high blood pressure, heart attacks and osteoporosis. There are many other psychological benefits as well.

Yoga also favors meditation and relaxation as some of its most efficient guards against stress. Just 30 minutes of stretching your muscles and deep breathing can bring any yoga practitioner into a state of peace and relaxation that gives both mind and body the chance to replenish their energy. Special yoga poses such as the head stand are excellent for aiding circulation and allowing the heart rate to drop. This kind of position also "forces" you to breathe deeply, thereby improving brain oxygenation.

Another similar pose would be the shoulder stand, which enhances the [positive effects of breathing](#) by increasing the lung's capacity to process oxygen. Both these poses are beneficial to the spine as well, because they allow it to stretch and relax at the same time. The plough pose may also be used in order to strengthen the abdominal and lower back muscles. Savasana, also known as the corpse pose, is excellent for relaxing the body between asanas.

The above-mentioned poses need to be accompanied by some special breathing techniques. The Anuloma Viloma technique balances the prana levels in the organism and is recommended for use during physical exercises. The Ujjayi breathing method clears the nasal passages and throat of phlegm and allows for a better air circulation. This technique also works well for improving the responses of the nervous system.

Okay ladies, don't feel left out, it's your turn in the spotlight.

Yoga for Women

Emotional pressure and stress have a pronounced effect on every woman's health. It has been proven that emotional distress is often the underlying cause for physical weakness and different illnesses. There are many other factors that affect women's health such as hormonal changes, which are far more pronounced than in the case of men. Yoga offers an excellent solution to most of these issues that are unavoidable.

Different stages in a woman's life may bring various problems. There are issues associated with menstrual cramps and the premenstrual syndrome that affect many women around the world. The noticeable hormonal changes that go along with menopause are another reason why

women have to cope with increased stress levels. Another of the major changes in a woman's life is associated to pregnancy. This is a stage in which every health problem could be reflected in the baby's health, so it is vital for the mother to stay healthy throughout the entire pregnancy process. Yoga offers various solutions to all of these issues, enabling women to get past these inherent obstacles.

Yoga is often used by women in preparation for the last months of pregnancy and labor. A fit and healthy mother has a better chance of delivering the baby without any complications, so the importance of yoga practices becomes even more important. Different yoga poses such as the fish yoga pose or the cat pose help the mother develop both the physical and mental strength that will greatly help during labor. Regular yoga practice can lessen the negative effects of various pregnancy problems such as morning sickness. Stretching poses also help the mother relax and strengthen the pelvic muscles, which will function easier during birth. Breathing techniques are invaluable during birth as they allow the mother to focus on the delivery rather than having to fight off the associated birth pain.

Women in the postnatal period or those just wanting to improve their vitality and energy levels can try some of the following poses. The fish yoga pose, for example, helps women increase oxygen processing and promotes relaxation. This pose is also known to strengthen back and neck muscles, while also improving the responses of the nervous system. The hero yoga pose is one of the best if the woman is looking for a period of time dedicated to meditation.

The cat pose is one of the most popular ones to be used by women, regardless of age or physical condition. It is excellent for increasing spinal column flexibility and relaxing the lower back muscles, which carry the weight of the whole upper body while standing. The specific position of the cat pose also promotes increased kidney blood irrigation. This pose can be followed by the head stand, a slightly more difficult pose, but which also produces some beneficial results. This pose allows certain parts of the body rest as they do not have to function to maximum capability due to the reverse of gravity. Women may specifically benefit from this pose as it relieves back pain and lower back muscle pressure.

Of course we can't forget those special ladies and their concerns. Yes moms-to be, I'm talking about you. I know you are interested in staying fit and healthy for both you and your baby so let's examine some of the ways that you can use yoga to achieve that. The following article from Anastasia Dorohova gives some good guidelines for you to consider when [using yoga during pregnancy](#).

Yoga and Pregnancy

By Anastasia Dorohova

Every woman wants to have a healthy baby. Yogic practices, when done with care, can make a woman's body stronger and more flexible. Yoga poses tone your muscles, improving the overall balance and circulation, while making your joints more limber.

Yoga poses help you breathe and relax, which can help you adjust to the physical demands of labor, birth, and motherhood. Learning how to do ujayi breathing primes you for labor and childbirth by training you to stay calm when you need it most. If you are afraid during labor, the body produces adrenalin and shuts down the production of oxytocin, a hormone that makes labor progress. Yoga practice will help you fight the urge to tighten up when you feel the pain, and show you how to breathe instead.

The practice of meditation is extremely beneficial for you and your baby. It has been proven to slow down your heart rate, relax and focus your mind - all great for the baby.

As a general rule, avoid backbending poses, as well as extreme forward bending. Place your legs apart for seated paschimottanasana (forward bend.)

If you never practiced inverted poses before, now is not the time to start. However, if you have a practice of inversions, you may carefully continue for the first two trimesters. Don't hold the poses for too long.

You may want to skip any movements that require you to lie flat on your back for longer than a few minutes, especially after 20 weeks of pregnancy. Lying on your back can put pressure on your inferior vena cava, the vein that returns blood from the legs to the heart, and can cause dizziness, shortness of breath, and nausea. But many women are comfortable lying in this position well into their pregnancies, so watch your body and your instincts.

First trimester

You don't have many restrictions this early in your pregnancy. If you're a regular yoga practitioner, accept that your routine will require modifications as time goes on. Listen to your body.

Second trimester

Don't try to hold poses for a long time, and remember to sink into yoga positions slowly and carefully to avoid injury, because of your loosening joints. Your expanding belly will effect your sense of balance.

Third trimester

You're probably feeling less graceful now that your belly is bigger, so perform standing poses with your heel to the wall to avoid losing your balance and risking injury to you or your baby. Props such as blocks and straps can also help you move through different poses with greater stability.

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Okay, we've covered men and women, who's left? Oh yes, let's not forget our seniors. Hopefully we will all the opportunity to reach elderly age (but never get old of course!). Anyhow senior do have some special needs and considerations which we will talk about right now.

Yoga for Seniors – Using Yoga to Reverse Aging

By Barry Craft

Yoga has become quite a popular exercise for people of all ages, but especially for the seniors. Yoga exercise for elderly people can help reverse the aging process and provide a wide range of positive benefits even if practiced on a moderate basis. There are many styles of yoga ranging in degree of difficulty. However, the basic moves and positions can be utilized by any

age group. It is all about how you approach your exercise program that makes the difference. Since everyone is unique, it is always advisable to see your doctor before beginning any type of exercise program.

The Benefits of Yoga

Yoga can provide positive health benefits for anyone but can be especially helpful for those more mature adults. The three main areas of development would be balance, stretching, and strength. Balancing exercises strengthen leg muscles and help to prevent falling. Every year in the U.S. there are tens of thousands of patients admitted for broken hips and usually some type of fall is the reason for the bone fractures. Balancing exercises can also help you avoid disabilities that may result from falling.

Beginning Yoga Exercises

Stretching exercises can increase your range of motion and allow you to do more of the things you need and want to do. Stretching by itself is not designed to enhance strength or endurance, however keeping one's muscles more flexible can also reduce strains and may improve circulation as well. Flexibility exercises, such as stretching, might help keep your body and joints limbered up, which could help prevent injuries and falling. It sometimes can speed up a recovery from an injury. Exercises for strength help build muscle as well as increasing your metabolic rate. This stabilizes blood sugar which and helps you maintain a healthier weight. By having stronger muscles, you will be less likely to need frequent assistance in doing your normal routines.

The Mental Benefits of Yoga

Besides the physical attributes of yoga, there are several mental benefits seniors can enjoy. By definition, yoga means union; therefore it is no surprise that one of the main underlying concepts is to achieve greater peace and harmony by better uniting the body and spirit. Perspectives on life and ourselves tend to change as we advance in age. The spiritual side of the world receives more importance as we grow older - this forms an excellent foundation for elderly people to start practicing yoga.

Proper Warm-ups for Seniors

It is recommended for seniors to begin their yoga exercise with slow, controlled motions. This phase can last for several weeks or longer depending on the individual. It is especially important in the earlier stages to avoid muscle sprains and strains. That will make the experience more enjoyable and safer while reducing the chances for injury. Even while using this slow gradual approach, many retirees can still benefit from improved circulation, range of motion and vitality.

Improve Your Circulation

Another benefit of yoga that most seniors can experience is improved circulation. This helps to better utilize the oxygen in their blood vessels resulting in improved memory and concentration. Many elderly people experience losses in these areas as the age increases and yoga can help reduce or reverse some of these effects. Seniors have many options for keeping fit through various forms of light exercise. One of the most important and often overlooked keys to staying healthy is proper breathing. That happens to be one of the foundations of yoga. Air feeds our bodies just as much as food and water does. Slow, deep breathing through the nose helps to cleanse the body on many different levels.

Just Get Started

Contrary to popular belief, yoga does not require years of practice to attain many positive results. In fact many elderly people really look forward to their yoga exercise sessions not only

for the increased vitality also opportunities or social contacts if done in a group situation. The biggest key to succeeding is just getting started.

Feel free to reprint this article in its entirety in your ezine or web site, as long as you include the resource box and the active link to my website. Please notify me when it is used. Barry Craft is the owner and webmaster of <http://www.Yoga-Exercise-Help.com>.

For more inspiring and useful tips about the benefits of yoga , please visit our web site.

All right, we can't forget our little ones. I believe it is never too young to start teaching children about fitness, health, and exercise. Yoga can yield many positive benefits for children and parents of those children as well. Paul Jerard's article below does a fine job of addressing some concerns and also giving some good tips about yoga and children.

Nine Things You Should Know About Yoga for Children

By Paul Jerard

Here are some guidelines and realistic expectations for parents, who are considering Yoga for their children. For your child, Yoga is much more than a kid's fitness class. Just like adults - kids need time to learn to deal with life's daily pressures, too.

Make sure your child starts with easy postures, and be patient with your child's progress. Some beginner children can often be more flexible than advanced adult Yoga practitioners, but they don't know their own limitations.

Discover your child's real passions. When your child wants to go to Yoga class, it is much better than what you want for your child. This is not to say that you should avoid guidance. However, it is not advisable to push a child into a Yoga class, if your child doesn't enjoy it - no matter how popular Yoga may be. All children are different, and what is good for one of your children, may not agree with another.

Encourage your child to see the deeper benefits of Yoga: Learning to live within the moment, and appreciating the present situation, instead of focusing on desires, these are built-in mental assets of Yoga practice. Enhanced concentration skills are another benefit that will result in improved academic performance.

Look for a qualified Yoga instructor, who has experience in teaching children. Make sure the child's Yoga instructor has adequate experience.

Watch your child practice, with his or her, Yoga teacher, and make sure you are comfortable with the environment, policies, and safety guidelines. Rules and discipline policies are usually in place so that each child can learn Yoga and get the most out of their experience.

For your child's safety at home: Parents, who are not familiar with Yoga, should not let their "beginner Yoga children" practice anything beyond beginner techniques, without a competent Yoga instructor's approval. Once your child's Yoga instructor gives approval of home practice,

you are fine. This one safety factor should encourage parents to learn Yoga, practice with their children, and live a healthy life.

A smaller kid's Yoga class is actually better than a larger one. This insures that your child's Yoga instructor can pay close attention to each student during practice session.

Price should not be the top factor in choosing your child's Yoga teacher. Would you choose the cheapest dentist, clothes, or car? Very often, "you get what you pay for."

Lastly, with steady practice, you should expect to see your child gradually gain self-esteem, stress management tools, self discipline, enhanced academic performance, and improved athletic skills.

Paul Jerard, is a co-owner and the director of Yoga teacher training at: Aura Wellness Center in, North Providence, RI. He has been a certified Master Yoga teacher since 1995. He teaches Yoga, martial arts, and fitness to children, adults, and seniors in the greater Providence area. Recently he wrote: Is Running a Yoga Business Right for You? For Yoga students who may be considering a new career as a Yoga teacher. <http://www.yoga-teacher-training.org>

Well, that about wraps things up. Regardless of your age or gender, you've got plenty of information to help you get started with your yoga exercise program. Just get out there and do it. I know from personal experience with many types of exercise programs, it is often very hard to get started and make it through the first few sessions, but once you do you really feel good about yourself.

Here is something that helps put things in perspective for me. I think in terms of R.O.I. meaning return on investment. The 20 or 30 minutes of daily exercise can help propel you and keep you mentally and physically motivated for the whole day. Try to find something the business world that can safely give you back 48 times what you put into it. Think about that! On the flip side, when you are at a weak moment of temptation and about to stuff your face with that extra large dessert, think again in terms of your return. You will get maybe 20 or 30 minutes of actual enjoyment in return for that extra body fat and all the work it will take to get rid of it. I'm sure you would agree that is a poor investment.

I hope all this information helps you in some way. Feel free to send me a personal note with your comments or suggestions. Just visit my web site <http://www.yoga-exercise-help.com/contactform.php>.

Final Note: Most people reading this report have received it as a free bonus for signing up on my announcement list. However, if you received it from a friend or associate, that's great! I encourage you to visit my site (<http://www.yoga-exercise-help.com>) and see all the other useful information, articles and tips that can help you. Feel free to distribute this report at no cost as long as all the links and content remain unchanged. Of course never send it as unsolicited email. We despise spam and would not want to be accused of it. Thanks.

Yours in Health,

Barry Craft