

What Yoga can Do to Your Health

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Some believe that Yoga is a science of health, unlike modern Western medicine which is largely a science of disease and treatment. When Yoga is practiced correctly, it helps reduce the negative effects of stress on the mind and body and can help the body cope with aging.

Stress and trauma have an amazing negative effect on a person's body. Stress can cause the soft tissue of the body to contract and harden in order to protect itself. When the body becomes over-stressed or traumatized through physical or mental injury, it will naturally try to limit its mobility so that no further damage is done. As a result, it begins to become rigid over time. As a person ages, the body gradually becomes stiffer and less agile.



However, pain and trauma are not always physical. Emotional stress also causes the body, mind, and the soul to narrow and compress. As a person continues to age, both physical and emotional stresses create the same constricting effect. This can bring new meaning to the term "heartache" or "pain in my side" or simply a feeling of uneasiness that is difficult to pinpoint the exact location.

For example, when a person's mind, soul, and body become restricted, the body slowly becomes unhealthy and cannot sufficiently flow nutrients, oxygen or even a sense of calmness. As a result, the body and mind have to work harder in order to compensate and this can lead to illness, uneasiness, listlessness, fatigue, and even depression and anger. An individualized Yoga practice helps in reducing stiffness in the body, improving the circulation, and opening the mind to new ways of coping with difficulties.

We all know what it's like to feel stress, especially with the way the housing market is going; and the gas prices rising; and the national income falling; etc. It is not unlikely to feel stress, anxiety, constant worries, nervous tension, and apprehension. If we are not able to find an outlet for these issues, our entire system is eventually affected. Most likely, the immune system is one of the first to be affected. In extreme cases, this unreleased pressure can build up over time and possibly lead to diseases like cancer.

However, practicing **Asanas** (postures) and pranayamas (control of the subtle life forces, often by means of special modes of breathing) can help protect the health and endurance of the mind, body, and soul. Yoga actually helps restore one's being to where it is meant to be... in balance. Practicing Asanas and pranayamas will help clean the internal organs by removing the **toxins** in the body. In fact, when a person does Asanas, **Pranayama**, Bandhas (yoga locks that hold in prana, the life force), and Mudras (gestures or hand positions), not only does his or her blood circulation improve, but his or her

lung capacity improves to help eliminate disease and unease in the mind and body.

Maybe this is why in ancient times, people believed that yogis could “live forever”. Stretching the mind and body does help the cells to grow and thrive. Also, proper alignment of postures helps keep the muscles in the correct position for each Asana. Consequently, the muscles do not get worn out and are therefore taught to stay fit throughout life. Perhaps this is why so many yogis do appear several years younger than they are. Maybe we’re on to something here. Is it possible that practicing Yoga is the new alternative to plastic surgery? Actually, plastic surgery and Yoga practice should not be compared. Yoga is more than a surface transformation, it is also an inner makeover. Yoga is a revolution of the mind, body, and spirit.

Yoga is also related to **mental health**. It is proven that a person who practices Yoga will go through incredible transformations that have a profound positive effect on his or her mental health. Some people who practice Yoga will experience a decline in anxiety, tension, and worries. Practicing **Meditation**, Asanas, and breathing exercises on a regular basis will help increase flexibility and ease the mind. Yoga helps free the mind from mental turbulence and racing thoughts that can make us feel a little crazy at times.

Yoga also balances the mind and reduces apprehension, anger, and uncertainty. However, it’s not that the thoughts, disappointment or doubt disappear, it’s that we learn to become less attached to the uncertainty of life and be present and live for today, this moment. Yoga is known to withhold the mysterious ability to breathe life into one’s awareness of the world around them. Yoga has the ability to change negative thought patterns and increase a person’s motivation. Yoga provides a feeling of well-being and aliveness.

According to a research from Yale University School of Medicine (2005), results show that people who practice Yoga and Meditation at least three times a week may reduce their blood pressure, pulse, and their risk of **heart disease**. Moreover, Yoga improves heart health in both **healthy** individuals and those with diagnosed heart disease, says Satish Sivasankaran, MD, who conducted the study while training at Yale.

He goes on to say that volunteers taking a six-week Yoga-Meditation program improved blood vessel function by 17% and the study participants who had heart disease had close to a 70% improvement.

Yoga has been around for thousands of years and much research has been done in order to establish the **health benefits** of Yoga such as advancements in physiological and psychological health. One of the primary beliefs that Yoga practitioners share is that the mind and body are a unified arrangement. This construction of the mind and body will create synchronization and it will repair itself when placed in a well-balanced atmosphere.

Extended Yoga practices can help pulse rate, respiratory and blood pressure, increase immunity to disease, improve heart effectiveness, and help calm the nervous system. Yoga practice has also been known to regulate gastrointestinal functions, normalize endocrine function, increase joint range of motion, increase endurance, improve energy, develop eye-hand coordination, improve sleep, and the list goes on.

The studies of psychological benefits suggest that Yoga can develop one’s self-awareness, self-acceptance, well-being, as well as improve focus, memory, emotions, cognitive ability, etc.

Another fascinating feature about Yoga is its ability to work all the internal organs and glands by massaging the organs during certain Asanas. Certain time proven techniques aid in the detoxification of the body. For example, in stretching the muscles and performing a thorough massage, Yoga ensures the best flow of blood and fluids that your body needs. As a result, toxins are removed from the body. However, the most advantageous health benefits provided by Yoga are the balance and union of mind, body, and soul.

Namaste!