



10 Reasons to Practice Yoga

1. STRESS RELIEF: Yoga reduces the physical effects of stress on the body. By encouraging relaxation, yoga helps to lower the levels of the stress hormone cortisol. Related benefits include lowering blood pressure and heart rate, improving digestion and boosting the immune system as well as easing symptoms of conditions such as anxiety, depression, fatigue, asthma and insomnia.

2. PAIN RELIEF: Yoga can ease pain. Studies have demonstrated that practicing yoga asanas (postures), meditation or a combination of the two, reduced pain for people with conditions such as cancer, multiple sclerosis, auto-immune diseases and hypertension as well as arthritis, back and neck pain, and other chronic conditions. Some practitioners report that even emotional pain can be eased through the practice of yoga.

3. BETTER BREATHING: Yoga teaches people to take slower, deeper breaths. This helps to improve lung function, trigger the body's relaxation response and increase the amount of oxygen available to the body.

4. FLEXIBILITY: Yoga helps to improve flexibility and mobility, increasing range of movement and reducing aches and pains. Many people can't touch their toes during their first yoga class. Gradually they begin to use the correct muscles. Over time, the ligaments, tendons and muscles lengthen, increasing elasticity, making more poses possible. Yoga also helps to improve body alignment resulting in better posture and helping to relieve back, neck, joint and muscle problems.

5. INCREASED STRENGTH: Yoga asanas (postures) use every muscle in the body, helping to increase strength literally from head to toe. And, while these postures strengthen the body, they also provide an additional benefit of helping to relieve muscular tension.

6. WEIGHT MANAGEMENT: Yoga (even less vigorous styles) can aid weight control efforts by reducing the cortisol levels as well as by burning excess calories and reducing stress. Yoga also encourages healthy eating habits and provides a heightened sense of well-being and self-esteem.

7. IMPROVED CIRCULATION: Yoga helps to improve circulation and, as a result of various poses, more efficiently moves oxygenated blood to the body's cells.

8. CARDIOVASCULAR CONDITIONING: Even gentle yoga practice can provide cardiovascular benefits by lowering resting heart rate, increasing endurance and improving oxygen uptake during exercise.

9. FOCUS ON THE PRESENT: Yoga helps us to focus on the present, to become more aware and to help create mind body health. It opens the way to improved concentration, coordination, reaction time and memory.

10. INNER PEACE: The meditative aspects of yoga help many to reach a deeper, more spiritual and more satisfying place in their lives. Many who begin to practice for other reasons have reported this to be a key reason that yoga has become an essential part of their daily lives.

Text courtesy of Yoga Alliance.