

Yoga stretches are specifically designed to lengthen your muscles, but also to stabilize your joints, stimulate your organs, balance your endocrine system, and strengthen your muscles as you hold the stretch. In Yoga, muscles are given maximum stretch only achieved by working gradually and slowly. This stretch is then held gently without forcing the muscles. The fibres are lengthened and become elastic. This will not happen if muscles are forced or jerked. When stretching, twisting, bending forwards and backwards, various organs are alternately stretched, squeezed, stimulated, refreshed, or relaxed. In the process, they are either rinsed in fresh blood or drained of old blood. Some postures exert direct pressure on the large intestines and kidneys, helping the elimination of waste products. In Yoga, muscle fibres are worked in two different ways: one is the stretching; the other is in the controlled and sustained contraction needed to maintain a stretch. This strengthens the muscles and improves their efficiency.

Sports develop tight muscles; create muscular imbalance, and structural irregularities. Yoga helps to solve these problems. Yoga increases the range of motion and reduces injury in sports. Yoga is designed to work all your muscles, not just a few isolated major muscle groups. Yoga's fine-tuning is the ultimate full body, mind work out.

WHO CAN DO YOGA?

There is no age limit for Yoga practice. People taking up yogic practice in their eighties have had very positive results in terms of improved health and mental equanimity. Even bedridden individuals with chronic diseases can still benefit from Yoga, though the practices must be carefully tailored to their particular needs. Yoga can benefit kids just as much as it helps adults. You can do Yoga even if your body is very stiff. If your body is out of shape, you should practice gently at first taking care not to create any injuries.

CAN WOMEN PRACTICE YOGA DURING PREGNANCY AND MENSTRUATION?

Yoga is a great way to keep fit during pregnancy too. Back in the old days, it was commonly told that women must refrain from practice during the four or so days of menstruation. Now in the modern era, it is a matter of personal preference. Some women do not want to do Yoga while they have their period, many do not mind and continue to practice during menses. Listen to your body, you are the best judge of what you can and



cannot do during menstruation or pregnancy. In any case, do not stand on your head (Sirasasana) during the menstrual period. All the Postures can be practiced during the first three months of pregnancy. Some postures however are inappropriate during pregnancy and menstruation. All the postures should be modified lightly according to the students' physical nature. Please ask the brochure-*Women in Yoga*

SHOULD I CONSULT A DOCTOR BEFORE STARTING YOGA?

Please be sure to inform your Yoga teacher of any serious health problems such as neck or back injuries, heart disease, high blood pressure, recent surgery etc. In any extreme case, you should consult a physician before joining the Yoga class. If your doctor is not familiar with Yoga, show her or him pictures of the postures or ask them to contact your Yoga teacher. It is always advised that you inform your family doctor of your physical activities, just to be on the safe side. Even though Yoga is a root of Eastern medicines such as Siddha and Ayurvedic, remember your Yoga teacher is not a doctor.

THIS IS MY FIRST CLASS. WHAT SHOULD I BRING?

You should not bring with you anything except the will to learn Yoga. We will provide a mat for you to practice on. For your first visit, it is better to arrive 05 to 10 minutes before class to register and to brief the teacher on your physical condition if you have any problems. It is important to wear comfortable, loose clothes and it is always better to eat four hours or more before practicing Yoga. If you are very hungry, eat light food at least two hours before. Keep the bowel empty. In addition, a warm water shower is fine but avoid using shampoo or oil before the class to avoid muscle cramps. Yoga is practiced with bare feet; socks are okay too.

HOW MANY CLASSES SHOULD I FOLLOW PER WEEK?

The number of classes you should take per week depends on your body and schedule. If you can do Yoga everyday, that is great. If not, try to do Yoga a few days a week. Certainly one class per week is not enough.



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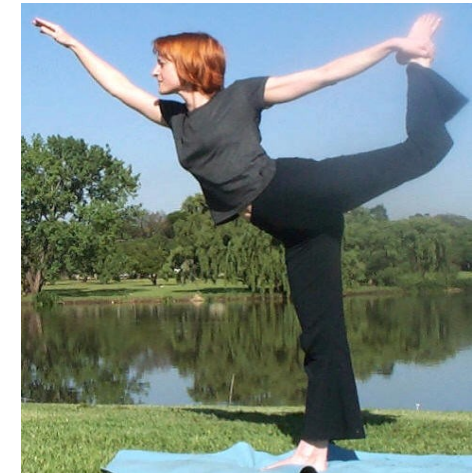
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Yoga!

Frequently Asked Questions



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Frequently Asked Questions.

WHAT IS YOGA?

Becoming one with the whole universe and being free by transcending beyond the body and mind is the goal of Yoga. In ancient Indian terms, Yoga means a disciplined path or way to free oneself and to be in union with the absolute.

There are four main paths of Yogas. One may find nowadays many types of Yogas. All those different names and types of Yogas will fall under the four main paths of Yogas. *Karma Yoga* (Yoga of doing duties and actions without expecting any results), *Bhakti Yoga* (Yoga of complete devotion and surrender to the God), *Jnana Yoga* (Yoga of wisdom and power of pure- reason), *Astanga Yoga* (Yoga of using physical, psychological and spiritual energies) are the four main Yogas.



The western world shows more interest in some sections of Astanga Yoga for physical and mental benefits. Astanga Yoga has eight limbs (sections). Out of them the third, fourth, and fifth limbs are commonly called *Hatha Yoga*. Because of western influence, interest, and popularity in *Hatha Yoga*, nowadays this is commonly known as "Yoga".

WHO INVENTED ASTANGA YOGA?

All Yoga philosophies are the collected experience and knowledge of ancient sages from the Indian sub continent. People in the Indian sub continent have practiced Astanga Yoga for 5000 years.

Astanga Yoga has eight limbs. They are Iyama (Ethical training), Niyama (Moral Training), Asanas (Postures), Pranayama (Breathing Techniques- Conquering Prana the vital force), Pratyahara (Withdrawing the mind from the senses- Mastering of the Senses), Dharana (Concentration- focusing the mind on certain centers), Dhyana (Meditation), and Samadhi (Transcending the mind-Super conscious state).

Hatha Yoga, which is part of Astanga Yoga, includes Yoga Postures (Asanas), Pranayama, and Pratyahara.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF YOGA?

Yoga: Gives strength, flexibility, balance, endurance, and energy. Gives good health and prevents many diseases. Relieves stress, calms the mind, frees one from restless desires, increases concentration, gives lasting pleasure and inner freedom. Helps to stretch, tone, refresh, relax and soothe the nerves. Makes one look and feel years younger, controls weight and reduces depression. It disciplines the path to physical, mental and spiritual growth and gives the experience of transcending beyond body and mind.

HOW MANY STYLES IN HATHA YOGA AND HOW DO THEY DIFFER FROM EACH OTHER?

There are so many organizations and styles of Hatha Yogas founded by modern Indian and western teachers. The differences are usually about emphasis, such as focusing on strict alignment of the body, coordination of the breath and movement, holding the postures, or the flow from one posture to another. All the styles share a common lineage back to Astanga Yoga.

WHAT TYPE OF YOGA YOUR STUDIO TEACHES?

Sivaya Yoga Studio teaches Hatha Yoga based on third, fourth, and fifth limbs of Astanga Yoga. It is a comprehensive set of physical, mental, and breathing exercises. Students do continuous smooth movements of the Postures (Asanas), while linking the body and mind using the active awareness of deep breath movements. Students will attain physical fitness, mental clarity, a balanced nervous system, greater self-understanding, stress control and awakened spirituality, but students should commit in three things to attain these benefits. That is practice, practice and more practice.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN YOGA, AEROBICS, AND OTHER EXERCISES?

Yoga focuses first on the health of the spine. The spinal column houses the centre of the nervous system, which plays an important part in the working of the human machine. The most important work of the Yoga postures are in strengthening and purifying the nervous system, particularly the spinal cord and nerve ganglia. The cells of the nervous system are toned and their pathways polished so that their activity is enhanced.



Every cell of every organ and muscle is invigorated and supplied with fresh blood while being drained efficiently of waste products. There is much less possibility of toxic build-up, either on the cellular level or in the organs themselves. By promoting the health of the organs, including the glands of the immune

system, the body's ability to resist disease is enhanced.

Normal exercises and aerobics emphasize stress on the muscles combined with quick harsh movements. Yoga by contrast avoids such movements, which tend to trigger lactic acid production in muscle fibres, thus causing fatigue. In the Yogic system, all movements are slow and gradual with proper deep breathing, relaxation, and focus on self-awareness.

Ordinary physical exercises develop the superficial muscles of the body. But Yoga is intended for thorough exercise of the internal organs, such as liver, spleen, intestines, heart, lungs, brain and the important eight ductless glands of the body which are called endocrine glands; playing a very important part in the economy of nature. The eight sets of endocrine glands are the pineal and the pituitary in the head, the thyroid, parathyroid and thymus in the region of the neck, the pancreas and the adrenals in the region of the solar plexus and finally the gonads or sex glands in the pelvic region.

In most physical training systems, the brain is neglected. Requisite quantity of blood must flow constantly to the brain. Yoga works up the internal organs and attracts a greater blood supply to them.

Yoga builds endurance. Though Yoga is not Aerobics the heart rate for a beginner at Yoga might occasionally go up close to aerobic levels. Aerobic exercise improves and increases the amount of oxygen level in the blood through an increased heart rate and deeper breathing. Yoga trains the heart and lungs to deliver increased oxygen to the muscles through a strong focus on the continuous flow of movement from one posture to another.

Yoga builds strength through static muscular contraction and lifting the weight of the body and its parts. Lifting weight takes strength. Weight training, for example, makes you stronger by breaking down and rebuilding muscle tissue. It is this breaking down and rebuilding that results in the bulky muscle look. In Yoga, you are not lifting barbells, but in many of the poses, you are lifting your own weight. Yoga increases strength by toning the muscles and Yoga balancing takes strength too. So does holding a Yoga posture for an extended time. Yoga strength training is isometric. Yoga's isometric action is easier on your muscles than the weight-bearing and pounding of other sports.