

Scientific Evidence Of The Effectiveness Of Yoga As A Complementary Treatment

Yoga is not intended to be an alternative to traditional medical treatment. Scientific studies have yet to prove that yoga can effectively treat or cure chronic illnesses. No studies have shown that yoga is better than regular intense exercise, or that yoga is safe as an alternative treatment for any illness.

However, there are studies that show that yoga is effective in decreasing depression and anxiety, increasing energy levels, physical ability, flexibility, and restoring regular sleep patterns. Scientific studies have concluded that yoga is a safe complement to regular treatment, and have generally shown that yoga is thought to be beneficial in particular chronic conditions, but to a very limited extent.

Western scientists studying yoga believe that it helps to reduce nervous system stress, control negative emotions, and control negative thinking. Yoga has also been shown to lower blood pressure, improve concentration, sleep, digestion, and flexibility. Yoga has been used as a supplementary treatment for illnesses such as AIDS, cancer, diabetes, asthma, and irritable bowel syndrome.

Yoga classes are a combination of physical exercise, breathing exercises, and meditation. These activities have particular benefits for people suffering from heart disease, hypertension, asthma, and osteoarthritis. For instance, yoga helps treat heart disease by lowering blood pressure, and increasing resistance to psychological stressors.

In 2006, a study was conducted by the University of Texas on 61 breast cancer patients. 30 patients participated in yoga during the period of their radiation treatments. The style of yoga they participated in was created specifically for cancer patients. It included breathing and relaxation exercises, and did not include very difficult physical exertion or difficult range of motion exercises. The study showed that those who participated in yoga had increased physical function, higher levels of social functioning, less sleep dysfunction, and less fatigue.

In 2007, another study was performed by the Department of Psychology at Karlstad University in Sweden. 103 adults were recruited from a university and participated in yoga for 6 weeks daily. They used the "Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale" to measure levels of depression before and after the 6 week period. The "Life Orientation Test" measured dispositional optimism. They also used a stress and energy test to measure stress and individual energy levels. The outcome was that the participants in the yoga group showed lowered anxiety, depression, and stress. They also had increased optimism, in relation to the control group who did not participate in yoga.

Crucial to the effectiveness of yoga therapy is the regular practice of the therapy, as well as the particular style of yoga that is used. For instance, the yoga class for the cancer patients had to be tailored specifically for them, otherwise it may not have been effective at all, or may have had detrimental effects. Also, in all of the studies that were conducted on yoga's effectiveness, there was a regular interval of practice that was to be maintained to help ensure the effectiveness of the treatment. Those who did not participate regularly or dropped out did not show improvement as expected.