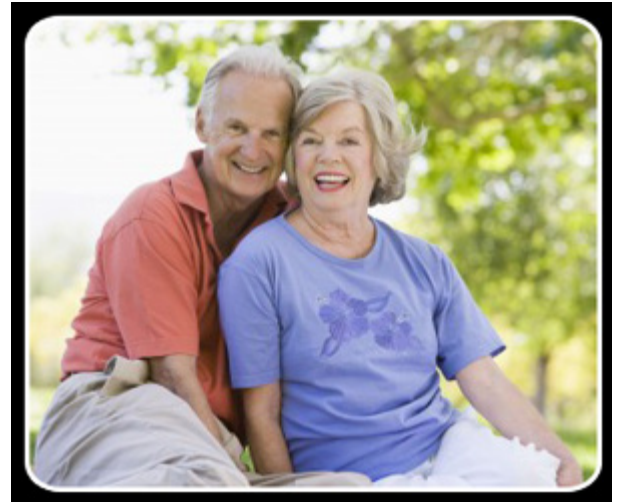


Yoga for Seniors

Is Yoga Good for Seniors?

One of the great things about yoga is that it is so adaptable to different populations with diverse physical abilities and needs. Though the popular image of yoga is of a young person twisted up like a pretzel with apparent ease, those who are older and less flexible can enjoy a yoga practice just as much and potentially benefit from it even more.



Is Yoga Appropriate for Seniors?

In most cases, seniors can absolutely do yoga. Many people with hectic schedules only find the time for activities such as yoga in retirement. Though the trend is to become more sedentary, retirement is the perfect time to pick up healthy habits that will promote longevity. Attending a regular yoga class will also establish a sense of community with teachers and fellow students. .

What Type of Yoga Should You Try?

What kind of yoga depends on your age, current level of fitness and physical ability. If you are starting a fitness regime for the first time (or after a long break) or have already lost significant muscle tone and flexibility, you should start with a very gentle hatha practice. Although it is possible to learn yoga from books and videos, the best way is through teacher instruction in a yoga class. Attending class will allow you to get the most out of yoga with the least risk of injury. Yoga classes especially for seniors are becoming increasingly available: check local senior centers, retirement communities, religious organizations and even health clubs. If you can't find a special senior class, a gentle beginners class will do. A yoga class that offers an emphasis on adapting the practice to individual needs through the use of props such as blocks and chairs, is also good for seniors.

The Benefits of Yoga

The benefits of yoga for seniors are much the same as those for the general population: increased muscle tone, balance, strength, and improved mood. Through pranayama (breathing exercises) lung capacity is increased. You can expect your posture to improve and you may sleep better. If you experience stress, yoga can help counteract that too. But keep in mind that these benefits will not come overnight after a single yoga class. Regularly attending at least three classes a week will allow you to enjoy the best yoga has to offer.

Precautions

Be sure to speak to your doctor before trying yoga, especially if you suffer from any chronic conditions or are very inactive. Those with spinal disk problems or glaucoma should take special care, as there are poses to avoid (twists and inversions, respectively).

