

YOGA: Fitness for the Whole Body

Yoga is an ancient system of personal development encompassing mind, body and spirit. It is now embraced by modern science and by millions of Americans. Yoga can benefit anybody, from babies to seniors, and can be adapted for any body, from pregnant women to hardcore athletes. Take a class and see why yoga is often called the "fountain of life."

1. YOGA for strength

Building or rebuilding - muscle strength is just one of the many reasons to do yoga. The wide variety of yoga poses helps strengthen muscles in all areas of your body. Yoga can be especially helpful in strengthening back muscles - and reducing lower back problems.

2. YOGA for flexibility

When people think 'yoga,' they often picture extraordinary flexibility - bodies twisted into amazing postures. Fortunately, you don't have to be naturally flexible to do yoga. With yoga's gentle pace, your body can become flexible and strong at the same time.

3. YOGA for balance

Yoga teaches balance in body and mind, both essential for overall health in hectic times. Good physical balance reduces the risk of injuries and life-threatening falls, especially for older people. Mental balance helps us survive the natural ups and downs of daily life.

4. YOGA for energy

Yoga is an energizing activity - both physically and mentally. Yoga poses stimulate the flow of oxygen into the lungs and the flow of blood throughout the body. Traditionally, yoga classes also include a relaxation pose - time to breathe deeply and rest completely.

5. YOGA for stress reduction

Numerous studies confirm that people who do yoga feel less stressed generally - and are better able to handle highly stressful situations. Yoga enhances your ability to concentrate (by paying attention to your breathing) - and to clear your mind of extraneous thoughts.

6. YOGA for every body

A wide spectrum of yoga classes are available in this country. Some have a spiritual emphasis and include teaching about Eastern philosophy. Others focus on the health and fitness aspects of yoga. The key is to find a class or video that fits you and your lifestyle.

