THERAPEUTIC YOGA

FAST FACTS

- A survey conducted by the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIH) found that yoga is one of the most sought after and used forms of healing complementary medicine.
- A 2020 report by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality evaluated 10 studies of yoga for low back pain involving 1,520 total participants. They found that yoga improved pain and function for up to 12 months, with similar effects to other exercises and massage.
- The U.S. military has adopted yoga as one of many mindbody therapies used in training service members and for the military community as a whole for and resilience.

WHAT IS THERAPEUTIC YOGA?

Numerous studies attest to the benefits of yoga, the centuries-old mind-body practice, for a wide range of health-related conditions—particularly stress, mental health, and pain management.

This has led to the development of a new form of yoga: therapeutic yoga. In therapeutic yoga, yoga postures are applied to treat chronic health conditions. Certified yoga therapists receive extensive training in body mechanics, organ systems, medications and their side effects, and disease symptoms and progression.

While yoga teachers typically teach classes as well as working with individuals, yoga therapists usually work with patients one-on-one, often in a hospital or clinic settings.

WHAT CONDITIONS DOES THERAPEUTIC YOGA TREAT?

Yoga therapists often work with people who have musculoskeletal problems, such as back and neck pain or arthritis. They can also help treat anxiety, symptoms of cancer and treatment, and long term effects of COVID.

WHAT IS THE EVIDENCE?

Studies find therapeutic yoga can relieve stress, lower breathing and heart rate, reduce blood pressure and cortisol levels, and improve quality of life. The stretching and flexibility that comes with yoga therapy provides pain relief, with studies demonstrating its benefits in patients with arthritis, carpal tunnel syndrome, and back pain. It has also been shown to improve anxiety, obsessive-compulsive disorder, major depression, and insomnia, and may help people with Parkinson disease.

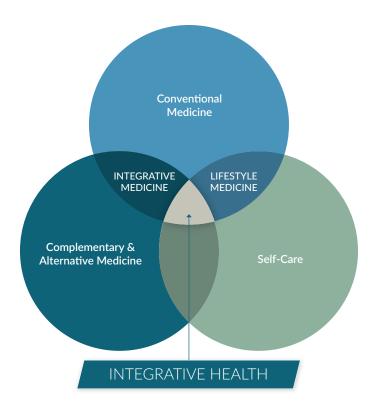
Significant benefits of yoga were reported in arthritis and other musculoskeletal disorders, as well as in cardiovascular endurance in healthy individuals. In patients with COPD and asthma, yoga programs focused on breath control and meditation significantly improve objective measures of lung function.

There is also good evidence that yoga practice mitigates risk factors for cardiovascular disease, including weight and blood pressure.

Yoga therapy can be helpful for symptoms of cancer and treatment and for recovery after cancer treatment. It has benefits for both physical and psychological symptoms. Some of the best medical centers in the country now offer yoga therapy, including the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center, Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, and the Mayo and Cleveland Clinics.

How do I find a yoga therapist? My notes and questions The International Association of Yoga Therapists (IAYT) sets educational standards for the training of yoga therapists and accredits training facilities. Standards include 90 hours of training in anatomy and physiology, as well as 45 hours devoted to learning about commonly used drugs and surgical procedures they may encounter, common medical terminology, psychology, and mental health. Overall, therapeutic yoga instructors must complete a minimum of 800 hours of training over two years, most which must be provided in person, not remotely. This includes a minimum of 205 hours as a practicum. You can find members of IAYT here. Does insurance cover therapeutic yoga? So far, most insurance companies do not pay for therapeutic yoga. Some insurance companies provide discounts if you attend classes run by a specific company or organization. Are there precautions, side effects or safety concerns I should be aware of before I try therapeutic yoga? Make sure the yoga therapist you choose is certified. Look for the letters C-IAYT, RYT, or both after their name. Working with a therapist who is trained to treat your specific health conditions reduces your risk. Certain poses should be modified or avoided for: Women who are pregnant • People with certain medical conditions, such as high blood pressure, glaucoma, and sciatica People with chronic pain who can be injured by specific movements **Side Effects** Although rare, certain types of strokes as well as pain from nerve damage are among the possible side effects of practicing yoga. Since yoga therapy uses the physical poses found in yoga classes, your therapist should be aware of possible risks. Minor side effects can include - Dizziness - Fatigue - Weakness - Nausea - Heat exhaustion Talk to your doctor Let your health care providers know that you would like to include

therapeutic yoga in the tools you are using to improve your health.



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