

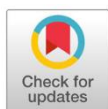
# Health impacts of yoga: a brief review

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## Abstract

Yoga is a holistic practice that has been used for thousands of years to promote health and well-being. The physical postures, breath control, and meditation techniques used in yoga have been found to have numerous health benefits, including improving flexibility, strength, balance, and cardiovascular health, reducing stress and anxiety, and improving mental clarity and focus. Recent research has shown that yoga can also be an effective complementary therapy for a variety of health conditions, such as chronic pain, depression, anxiety, and insomnia. Yoga has been found to be particularly effective in reducing stress and anxiety, which are common risk factors for many chronic diseases. Yoga is a non-competitive practice that can be adapted to suit the needs and abilities of individuals of all ages and fitness levels. It is a safe and effective way to improve overall health and well-being, and can be easily integrated into a daily routine. Therefore, yoga is a valuable tool for promoting health and well-being on all levels - physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. It has become increasingly popular around the world, and is now widely recognized as a valuable complementary therapy for a variety of health conditions.

**Keywords:** Human Health, Mini-Review, Medicine, Yoga

## Introduction

Yoga is a mind-body practice that originated in ancient India over 5,000 years ago. It is a holistic practice that incorporates physical postures, breath control, meditation, and ethical principles to promote health and well-being on all levels - physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual<sup>1</sup>.

The word "yoga" means "union" in Sanskrit, and the practice is aimed at bringing the body, mind, and spirit into harmony and balance. There are many different types of yoga, each with its own unique practices and philosophies<sup>1,2</sup>.



Yoga has many physical and mental health benefits, including improving flexibility, strength, balance, and cardiovascular health, reducing stress and anxiety, and improving mental clarity and focus. It is a non-competitive practice that can be adapted to suit the needs and abilities of individuals of all ages and fitness levels. In addition, yoga has become increasingly popular around the world, with millions of people practicing yoga as a form of exercise, stress relief, and spiritual practice<sup>3,4,5</sup>.

### **History of Yoga in Indonesia**

Yoga is an ancient practice that originated in India over 5,000 years ago. The word "yoga" comes from the Sanskrit word "yuj," which means "to yoke" or "to unite." The goal of yoga is to unite the body, mind, and spirit to achieve a state of balance and inner peace<sup>1</sup>.

The history of yoga can be traced back to the Indus-Sarasvati civilization in Northern India, which existed from 2600 BCE to 1900 BCE. The earliest evidence of yoga comes from the ancient texts called the Vedas, which were written during this time period. The Vedas contain hymns, rituals, and philosophical teachings that are the foundation of Hinduism<sup>1</sup>.

The practice of yoga was further developed by the Upanishads, which were written around 800 BCE. The Upanishads introduced the concept of karma, the law of cause and effect, and the idea of reincarnation. These concepts are central to Hinduism and are still taught in yoga today<sup>1</sup>.

The next major development in yoga came with the Yoga Sutras, which were written by the Indian sage Patanjali around 400 BCE. The Yoga Sutras are a collection of 196 aphorisms that outline the principles and practices of yoga. They are considered the authoritative text on yoga and are still studied by practitioners today<sup>1</sup>.

In the centuries that followed, yoga continued to evolve and adapt to the changing cultural and religious landscape of India. It was not until the late 19th and early 20th centuries that yoga began to spread to the West. Swami Vivekananda, a Hindu monk, introduced yoga to the United States in 1893 when he spoke at the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, several prominent yoga teachers, including B.K.S. Iyengar and Pattabhi Jois, developed their own styles of yoga and introduced them to the West. Today, yoga is a popular form of exercise and relaxation around the world, with millions of people practicing it every day.

However, yoga was introduced to Indonesia in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, during the country's struggle for independence from colonial rule. Indian teachers, who were involved in the independence movement, brought yoga to Indonesia as a way to promote physical and mental health among the people.

One of the most influential Indian teachers was Swami Sivananda, who visited Indonesia in the 1930s and established a yoga center in Jakarta. Sivananda's teachings emphasized the holistic benefits of yoga, including its ability to promote physical health, mental clarity, and spiritual growth.

In the 1960s and 70s, yoga became more popular in Indonesia as part of a broader interest in spirituality and self-improvement. Many Indonesians began practicing yoga as a way to relieve stress, improve flexibility, and deepen their spiritual practice.

One of the key figures in the development of yoga in Indonesia was Ratu Bagus, a Balinese spiritual teacher who developed a unique form of yoga called "Bioenergy Yoga." Bioenergy Yoga combines traditional yoga postures with breathing techniques and energy work, aimed at promoting physical healing and emotional well-being.

Today, yoga is widely practiced in Indonesia, with many yoga centers and studios offering classes in a variety of styles, including Hatha, Vinyasa, and Ashtanga. Yoga has become an important part of Indonesia's wellness and tourism industries, attracting visitors from around the world who come to practice yoga and explore the country's natural beauty<sup>6,7,8</sup>.

## Types of Yoga

There are many different types of yoga, each with its own unique set of practices and philosophies<sup>9,10</sup>. Here are some of the most popular types of yoga:

- Hatha yoga: This is the most common type of yoga, and it focuses on physical postures, or asanas, combined with breathwork and meditation.
- Vinyasa yoga: This type of yoga is characterized by a series of flowing movements, synchronized with the breath.
- Ashtanga yoga: This is a rigorous and structured style of yoga, characterized by a set sequence of poses that are practiced in a specific order.
- Bikram yoga: Also known as hot yoga, this type of yoga is practiced in a room heated to 105 degrees Fahrenheit, with a specific sequence of 26 poses.
- Iyengar yoga: This type of yoga emphasizes proper alignment and uses props, such as blocks and straps, to help students achieve correct alignment in the poses.
- Kundalini yoga: This type of yoga emphasizes the awakening of the kundalini energy, which is believed to lie dormant at the base of the spine, through a combination of physical postures, breathwork, and meditation.
- Restorative yoga: This type of yoga involves holding passive postures for extended periods of time, using props to support the body and promote relaxation and restoration.
- Yin yoga: This type of yoga involves holding passive postures for extended periods of time, with a focus on deep stretching and relaxation.

These are just a few examples of the many different types of yoga that are practiced around the world. Each type of yoga has its own unique benefits and can be adapted to suit the needs of individual practitioners<sup>11,12</sup>.

### **Yoga for Human Health**

Yoga is known for its many health benefits for the mind and body. Regular yoga practice has been shown to improve flexibility, strength, balance, and overall physical fitness. It can also help reduce stress, anxiety, and depression, and improve sleep quality<sup>10,13,14,15,16,17</sup>. Here are some of the specific ways that yoga can benefit human health:

- Reduces stress: Yoga practice has been shown to reduce the levels of stress hormones in the body, leading to lower levels of anxiety and improved overall mood.
- Improves flexibility: Yoga poses, or asanas, help to stretch and lengthen muscles and improve joint range of motion, leading to greater flexibility and mobility.
- Strengthens muscles: Many yoga poses require holding the body in challenging positions, which helps to build strength and endurance.
- Improves balance: The focus on balance in many yoga poses can help improve overall balance and stability, reducing the risk of falls and injuries.
- Reduces inflammation: Studies have shown that regular yoga practice can help reduce inflammation in the body, which is associated with many chronic health conditions.
- Improves heart health: Yoga has been shown to lower blood pressure, improve cholesterol levels, and reduce the risk of heart disease.
- Promotes relaxation: The deep breathing and relaxation techniques used in yoga can help lower blood pressure, reduce muscle tension, and promote relaxation and overall well-being.

Overall, regular yoga practice can be a powerful tool for improving physical and mental health, reducing stress and anxiety, and promoting overall well-being<sup>18,19</sup>. While yoga cannot cure diseases, it can be an effective complementary therapy for managing and improving the symptoms of various health conditions. Here are some examples of how yoga can be used to support the treatment of certain diseases:

- Arthritis: Yoga can help reduce pain and stiffness in the joints, increase flexibility and range of motion, and improve overall physical functioning for people with arthritis.
- Diabetes: Yoga can help lower blood sugar levels, reduce stress, and improve overall physical and mental health for people with diabetes.
- Heart disease: Yoga can help lower blood pressure and cholesterol levels, improve heart function, and reduce stress and anxiety for people with heart disease.

- Asthma: Yoga can help improve breathing techniques, reduce stress, and improve overall respiratory health for people with asthma.
- Cancer: Yoga can help reduce symptoms such as fatigue, pain, and anxiety in cancer patients and survivors, and may also improve overall quality of life.

It's important to note that while yoga can be beneficial for managing symptoms and improving overall health, it should not be used as a substitute for medical treatment or advice. People with chronic health conditions should always consult with their healthcare provider before starting a yoga practice or any other complementary therapy<sup>20,21,22</sup>.

### Yoga in Clinical Research

Yoga has been the subject of numerous clinical studies and research over the past several decades, exploring its potential as a complementary therapy for a wide range of health conditions<sup>24,25</sup>. Here are some examples of research studies on yoga in clinical settings:

- Chronic Pain: A study published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* found that practicing yoga can be an effective complementary therapy for chronic low back pain. Participants who practiced yoga had greater improvements in pain, function, and quality of life than those who received standard care alone.
- Anxiety: A review of 17 randomized controlled trials found that yoga can be an effective treatment for anxiety. Yoga was found to be particularly effective in reducing symptoms of generalized anxiety disorder, social anxiety disorder, and post-traumatic stress disorder.
- Depression: A meta-analysis of 23 randomized controlled trials found that yoga can be an effective treatment for depression, with significant reductions in depressive symptoms observed in those who practiced yoga.
- Cancer: A systematic review of 24 randomized controlled trials found that yoga can improve quality of life and reduce fatigue in cancer patients and survivors.
- Cardiovascular Health: A study published in the *European Journal of Preventive Cardiology* found that practicing yoga can be an effective way to reduce risk factors for cardiovascular disease, such as high blood pressure and high cholesterol.

Overall, these and other research studies suggest that yoga can be an effective complementary therapy for a variety of health conditions. Further research is needed to fully understand the mechanisms of action of yoga and to identify which types of yoga and practices are most effective for specific health conditions<sup>26</sup>.

### Yoga in Clinical Research

Yoga therapy is a type of complementary and alternative medicine that uses yoga practices to help treat a variety of physical and mental health conditions. It combines traditional yoga techniques, such as asanas (postures), pranayama (breathing exercises), and meditation, with modern medical knowledge and techniques<sup>16,17</sup>.

Yoga therapy is practiced by trained and certified yoga therapists who work with clients to develop a personalized practice that is tailored to their specific health needs and goals. Yoga therapists may work with clients who have chronic pain, stress, anxiety, depression, or other health conditions<sup>16,17</sup>.

The goal of yoga therapy is to help clients achieve balance and harmony in their physical, mental, and emotional health. This is achieved through a variety of techniques, including:

- Asanas (postures) that are modified to meet the specific needs of the client.
- Pranayama (breathing exercises) to help regulate the breath and calm the mind.
- Meditation and visualization techniques to promote relaxation and reduce stress.
- Yoga nidra, a guided relaxation technique that promotes deep relaxation and healing.
- Ayurvedic principles, such as dietary recommendations and lifestyle changes, to support overall health and well-being.

Yoga therapy can be used in conjunction with other forms of medical treatment and therapy, and is often used as a complementary approach to support overall health and wellness. Research has shown that yoga therapy can be effective in reducing pain, anxiety, and depression, and improving overall quality of life for individuals with a variety of health conditions<sup>16,17</sup>.

Yoga therapy is often used to support the treatment of a variety of health conditions, such as anxiety, depression, chronic pain, and stress-related disorders. Yoga therapists in Indonesia may work with clients one-on-one or in group settings, and may also work in collaboration with medical professionals to provide integrated healthcare<sup>16,17</sup>.

Yoga therapy training programs are also available in Indonesia, providing certification and education for individuals who wish to become certified yoga therapists<sup>9</sup>. Presently, Yogamarta Indonesia in Surabaya, East Java provides some training programs and therapies. Overall, yoga therapy is an emerging field in Indonesia, and is becoming recognized as a valuable approach to support overall health and well-being.

## Conclusions

In conclusion, yoga is a holistic practice that offers numerous benefits for human health. From reducing stress and anxiety to improving flexibility and strength, yoga has been shown to support physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing. In addition, research has demonstrated the potential of yoga as a complementary therapy for a range of health conditions, including chronic pain, anxiety and depression, cardiovascular disease, and cancer. However, it's important to note that yoga should not be used as a

substitute for medical treatment or advice, and people with chronic health conditions should always consult with their healthcare provider before starting a yoga practice. Overall, incorporating yoga into a healthy lifestyle can be an effective way to support optimal health and wellbeing. With a variety of styles and practices to choose from, yoga can be adapted to meet the individual needs and goals of each practitioner.

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### Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest in any capacity, including competing or financial.

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