

Things Yoga Can Do For You

Yoga can benefit your sex life. A study published in *The Journal of Sexual Medicine* found improvements in arousal, orgasm, satisfaction, desire and lubrication—as well as a decrease in pain—following 12 weeks of yoga.

Yoga can help with depression and anxiety. A series of controlled trials has shown that yoga can help moderate stress-response systems and, in turn, improve heart rate, respiration rate and blood pressure. Yoga has also been shown to help with post-traumatic stress disorder.

Yoga can make you smarter. Studies have shown that aspects of cognitive performance (such as accuracy and reaction time) are heightened more by practicing yoga than by engaging in other aerobic exercises.



THE EXPERT
Toronto yoga instructor Grace Dubery

THE ULTIMATE YOGA GUIDE

Yoga is more than just a workout. Sure, it might help sculpt your arms and improve your race time, but that's not the point. Yoga is a mental, physical and spiritual belief system—getting fit is just a byproduct. Here's everything you need to know to make the most of your time on the mat. **BY KATE DALEY**

CAT AND COW POSE Start in child's pose with knees bent, arms outstretched in front of you and your head on the mat. Slowly rise on hands and knees into a tabletop position. Inhale, lift your chest and look skyward, curving your spine. Then exhale and arch your spine like a cat, dropping your head down and looking toward your navel. Do three to five repetitions, curving and arching your back, then return to child's pose.



UPWARD DOG From child's pose, rise onto your hands and knees into a tabletop position. Push your pelvis toward the floor, lifting your chest and supporting yourself with your arms, and extend your legs behind you. For a more advanced pose, lift your thighs off the floor by pressing your weight onto your feet for support. Look up to the ceiling and stay in this position for a few breaths. Return to all fours, then to child's pose to rest.



DOWNWARD DOG From child's pose, rise onto your hands and knees into a tabletop position. With arms locked, lift your hips toward the ceiling, keeping knees slightly bent, with your weight on the balls of your feet. For a more advanced pose, straighten your legs and stretch your heels toward the floor. Return to child's pose.



Yoga Dictionary

Don't speak Sanskrit? We asked Meagan McCrary, yoga teacher and author of *Pick Your Yoga Practice* (New World Library, 2013), to explain basic terminology.

OM: Often said at the beginning and end of class, om (rhymes with home) is a sacred utterance. It is believed to be the primordial sound of the universe and the resonance that brought everything into creation.

UJJAYI BREATH: One of the first things you'll notice in a yoga class is the loud, whale-like noise of everyone's breathing. Ujjayi breath is a type of conscious yogic breathing via the nostrils, achieved by slightly constricting the base of the throat. This takes practice, so don't worry if you can't get the hang of it initially.

SHAVASANA: Otherwise known as "corpse pose," this position involves lying on your back with your palms up and eyes closed. It's often performed at the very end of a class.

NAMASTE: A Sanskrit word spoken at the end of class, usually with your hands in a prayer position, it means, essentially, "I bow to that same place in you that is in me." In India, the word is used as an everyday greeting.

ASANA: This simply refers to any of the postures in yoga.



WARRIOR 2 AND REVERSE WARRIOR From the downward dog pose, step your right foot forward to meet your right hand in a deep lunge. Press your left heel on the floor to ground you. Windmill your arms up until you're standing with your arms extended on either side, keeping your right leg bent. Take three to five breaths. Extend your left arm back toward your left leg while raising your right arm skyward. Hold for a few breaths, then slowly rise to standing. Repeat on the other side.

CHECK OUT OUR BEGINNER'S YOGA VIDEO AT canadianliving.com/beginneryoga.



TRIANGLE From the reverse warrior pose, straighten your right leg. Bend toward your right leg, extending your right arm toward your right shin and lifting your left arm over your head. For more of a challenge, extend the fingertips of your right hand to the floor and turn your head skyward. Hold for a few breaths, then repeat on the other side.



TREE Stand with your feet together, shoulders pulled back and abs engaged. With your right toes turned out to the side, take your right ankle in your right hand and rest your foot on your inner left thigh. (Do not rest your foot on the knee area.) Find your balance, then reach your arms straight up and hold for three to

five breaths. Bringing your hands to prayer position, release your right foot, cross your right leg over the left just above the knee, and bend down into sitting position. For a more advanced pose, lower your abdomen until your elbows meet your right leg. Take a few breaths, then return to standing. Repeat on the other side.

TWISTED LUNGE Starting in a standing bend, with your legs straight and your head down at your knees, lift your head and step your right foot back into a lunge position, dropping your knee to the floor. Reach both arms straight up. Place your left hand on your left hip and twist your abdomen to rest your right elbow on the outside of your left knee. Bring your hands together in a prayer position. For more of a challenge, straighten your left leg, lifting the knee off the floor. Take a few breaths, then repeat on the other side.



The Best Mat Method For You

With the assistance of Christine Russell, yoga and meditation instructor and cofounder of Toronto's 889 Yoga, we've broken down the most common styles of yoga. Remember, every studio interprets these styles differently, so always call ahead before starting a new class.

For a gentle practice

HATHA: This refers to one of the original forms of yoga from India. These days, it's used as shorthand for gentle yoga. Try it if you're looking to relax or learn the foundational poses. **IYENGAR:** An alignment- and anatomy-focused practice that's a form of hatha, Iyengar will help you perfect your poses and breathing.

For a serious sweat session

HOT YOGA: You've probably heard of the most popular types of hot yoga: Bikram and moksha. Both are more or less the same and involve a set series of poses in a heated room. Hot yoga is great for detoxing, but steer clear if you're not good with high temperatures or have health issues.

For a spiritual experience

KUNDALINI: This style is focused on breath and meditation. It also incorporates music to bring out inner spiritual energy.

For ultimate relaxation

RESTORATIVE YOGA: This style is perfect for those who need to decompress or who are recovering from an injury or illness. Most of the movements are done on the floor using props such as blocks and pillows. Typically, you'll hold each pose for 10 minutes to calm your parasympathetic nervous system.

For a high-energy workout

ASHTANGA: A more vigorous form of yoga, this style consists of a set series of poses. Movements are linked to breathing, and you will definitely feel the effects the next day.

VINYASA (OR VINYASA FLOW):

Likely to make you sweat, this style consists of fast-paced, fluid movements. While it's similar to ashtanga in that poses are linked to breathing, the sequencing changes each class, which helps keep your body guessing.

For cross-training

POWER YOGA: A sportier form of yoga, this is a faster-paced style which often shares some similarities to vinyasa yoga. There are lots of poses that involve using your own body weight, so it's more focused on building strength and stamina.

Take a pause

If you have any health issues, be mindful of the practice you choose. Yoga can be very beneficial, but it can also lead to injury or exacerbate existing injuries if done improperly. If you are pregnant, consult a doctor before starting or continuing a yoga regimen.