

# FOREVER ACTIVE

PERSONALIZED FITNESS AND WELLNESS FOR MEN 50+

## Yoga and Its Value to the Older Adult

### Introduction

A lack of muscle strength, increase stiffness of the joints and muscles, decrease agility, balance and coordination, increased emotional stress or a decreased ability to cope effectively with occupational and life stress are all associated with the 50+ adult. Yoga is ideally suited as a one stop fix it shop for many of these ailments.

The development of yoga can be traced back to over 5,000 years ago and can be described as a large collection of techniques and practices (paths) aimed at integrating the mind, body and spirit to achieve a state of peace and wellness with oneself and your environment or universe.

The “yoga” we are most familiar with in North America is “Hatha Yoga”.

Hatha Yoga (ha = “sun” tha = “moon”) attains the union of mind-body-spirit through a practice of specific yoga postures and breathing and minimizes the spiritual practise of yoga. For the 50+ adult, this form of “physical” yoga is ideally suited to help improve muscle strength, flexibility, agility, balance and coordination. The goal of each of the physical poses in yoga is to achieve a balance so that no undue stress or discomfort is felt between each side of the body, or in a particular muscle, joint or bone. This is ideal for the 50+ adult who often has muscle strength and flexibility imbalances, arthritic joints (knees & hips) and osteoporosis (lack of calcium) of the bones. By focusing on your breathing as you maintain the postures you learn emotional control over your physical responses which is a key element in stress management. As well, when you practice yoga you are reminded that it is as important to exhale as fully as you inhale. This helps improve the flexibility of the rib cage, improves respiration and slows down the heart rate which facilitates relaxation.

Starting a yoga class can be more intimidating than starting a new exercise class because most older adults are unfamiliar with the practice of yoga versus regular exercise training. It is therefore important to identify a few guidelines so that the 50+ adult can feel comfortable and maximize the physical and emotional benefits that yoga has to offer.



### DID YOU KNOW

#### Guidelines for Starting Your Yoga Class for the 50+ Adult

1. Always be aware of any health concerns or physical limitations you may have. For example if you have high blood pressure it is imperative that you never hold your breath during any of the poses. Focusing on rhythmic breathing is an important component of yoga practice.
2. Always try to maintain good body alignment and posture. As a beginner, your yoga instructor will teach you the proper way of getting into each of the poses, how to maintain and hold the poses and how to exit the poses so you never put yourself into a position that will leave you vulnerable to injury.
3. At the beginning, reduce the length of time that each pose is held. You may not have the strength to hold a particular pose longer than 10-20 seconds. That is OK. Your strength and endurance will improve with repeated classes.
4. When you are holding a pose, focus your gaze on a specific spot to assist with your balance. Focusing on the ground or straight ahead is often easier and safer than looking upward.
5. As you learn the different poses, your instructor will offer different variations depending on your level of strength, flexibility, agility, balance and coordination. Like any new skill, learning and doing the various yoga poses takes time and repeated effort. Start by practicing within your physical limitations and you will see significant progress quickly and this will prevent any discouragement or frustration as you begin.

## Common Yoga Poses that a 50+ Adult can Feel Safe and Comfort Doing

Caution- Never perform any pose that you do not feel comfortable with. Yoga is about finding peace and wellbeing within yourself and is not meant to create anxiety or stress as you cope with trying to perform a pose that is too difficult or uncomfortable for you.



Easy Pose



Bound Angle Pose



MARTIN SCONDUTO

Seated Forward Bend



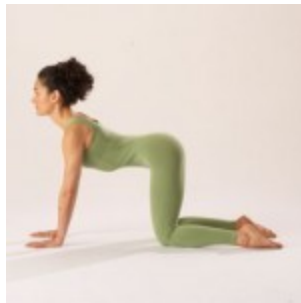
RORY EARNSHAW

Child's Pose



JEFFREY CROSS

Staff Pose



Cow Pose



DAVID MARTINEZ

High Lunge



MARTY SCONDUTO

Low Lunge



CHRIS ANDRE

Chair Pose



RORY EARNSHAW

Warrior 1 Pose



CHRIS ANDRE

Warrior 2 Pose



CHRIS ANDRE

Warrior 3 Pose



RORY EARNSHAW

Extended Side Angle Pose



DAVID MARTINEZ

Upward Facing Dog



MARTY SCONDUTO

Downward Facing Dog