

FOREVER ACTIVE

PERSONALIZED FITNESS AND WELLNESS FOR MEN 50+

Yoga

Yoga for the 50+ Adult

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 by definition is 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 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 imbalances, arthritic joints (knees & hips) and osteoporosis 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 and improves respiration as well as slows down the heart rate and facilitates relaxation.

Summary

Yoga is a safe and effective way for the 50+ adult to improve their level of fitness, prevent physical dysfunction, control stress and achieve wellness. There are a number of scientific studies that prove specific health benefits of yoga for the older adult. These benefits include, improvement in sleep, increase strength in arthritic joints, decrease in blood pressure, reduction in weight, improved mood and reduce anxiety, and reduction in chronic pain (reference: www.seniorfitness.net/YOGA.htm). Yoga has been practiced for over 5000 years for a reason, it works.



Did You Know

5 Different Types of Yoga Practice

1. Hatha - is the most widely practiced type in North America and is excellent for beginners. It is a gentle practice where you move slowly and smoothly through dozens of poses (. The focus is on holding the poses and integrating your breathing into the movement

2. Kundalini -emphasizes rapid movement through the poses and emphasizes breathing, chanting, and meditation. It has a more spiritual feel than Hatha and focuses on energy balance in your body.

3. Bikram - is practiced in a room heated to about 105 degrees Fahrenheit. The idea is that muscles will loosen and sweating will cleanse the body and remove symptoms of disease and chronic pain. Because of the heat there is the potential risk of dehydration, blood pressure changes, and cardiac problems with exertion .

4. Ashtanga—this is power yoga, and is designed to build strength and endurance. It is an aggressive workout where you move quickly from one pose to another. This is the Yoga style for you if you're looking for a tough, physically challenging workout.

5. Yin- is a slow-paced style with postures that are held for up to 5 minutes. The purpose is to apply moderate stress to the connective tissues (the tendons, fascia, and ligaments) with the aim of increasing circulation in the joints and improving flexibility.

Guidelines for Starting Your Yoga Class for the 50+ Adult

Starting a yoga class can be as intimidating as starting any new exercise class so it is important to follow a few guidelines so that you feel comfortable and maximize the physical and emotional benefits that yoga has to offer.

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 to effective 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 learning 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 from developing as you begin.
6. Never perform any pose that you do not feel comfortable with. Yoga is about finding peace and well-being 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.

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

Plank



Downward Facing Dog



Upward Facing Dog



Standing Half Forward Bend



High Lunge



Low Lunge



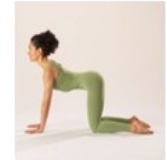
Bound Angle Pose



Child Pose



Cow Pose



Staff Pose



Seated Forward Bend



Extended Side Angle Bend



Yoga For the 50 + Male

Yoga is often thought of as a female orientated practice however more and more men are realizing the benefits of Yoga for their physical and mental health. Restored energy levels, increase circulatory flow through the legs and arms, enhanced strength and flexibility and stress reduction are just some of the benefits that men who do regular Yoga practice experience. Many men find some of the Yoga postures demanding due to their limited flexibility and feel frustrated after their first session. However, with repeated practice they become amazed on how quickly their flexibility improves and they begin to enjoy and master the sequence of poses. Yin Yoga, which slowly stretches the body with long-held postures is a popular type of yoga for men to start with.