



YOGA AS EXERCISE

Dr. Madhu Gaur

Assistant Professor, Shri J.N.P.G. College, Lucknow

Abstract

Yoga is great exercise. It stretches and tones muscles, increases flexibility and promotes balance. Yoga has beneficial effects on the nervous system, leading to deep relaxation and neutralizing stress. A 2016 review of 10 previously published studies of the metabolic intensity – the calories burned per minute – involved in performing traditional hatha yoga poses concluded that in most cases, the effort entailed adds up to only light physical activity. Very few poses, such as Surya Namaskar or sun salutations, a set of 12 powerful yoga postures, require moderate to vigorous effort, and most poses fall short of the equivalent a cardio workout. To get that kind of exercise we need to do aerobic activity that feels like work and makes us huff, puff and sweat. Walking briskly, jogging, biking (outdoors or on a stationary bike) can all suffice, as long as you're putting effort into it. For total fitness we also need strength training that works muscles against resistance and can help prevent osteoporosis, maintain mobility and prevent falls. One can do this by working out with free weights or weight machines or try the Pilates Method, a popular and intense form of strength training based on the idea that the abdominal and pelvic muscles are the body's power center.

Keywords: Yoga, Flexibility, Surya Namaskar and Physical Activity

Introduction

Yoga is an art which connects our soul, mind, and body together. It makes us strong, flexible, peaceful and healthy. In countries like India where people have so much stress and are fatigue, Yoga is very necessary. It makes us fit and healthy. A healthy mind can do everything.

Yoga is a group of physical, mental, and spiritual practices or disciplines which originated in ancient India. Yoga is one of the six orthodox schools of Hindu philosophical traditions. There is a broad variety of yoga schools, practices, and goals in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. Among the best-known types of yoga are Hatha yoga and Raja yoga.

The origins of yoga have been speculated to date back to pre-Vedic Indian traditions; it is mentioned in the Rigveda, but most likely developed around the sixth and fifth centuries BCE, in ancient India's ascetic and śramaṇa movements. The chronology of earliest texts describing yoga-practices is unclear, varyingly credited to Upanishads. The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali date from the first half of the 1st millennium CE, but only gained prominence in the West in the 20th century. Hatha yoga texts emerged around the 11th century with origins in tantra.

Yoga has roots in India. The first Hindu teacher to actively advocate and disseminate aspects of yoga to a western audience was Swami Vivekananda, who toured Europe and the United States in the 1890s. Yoga gurus from India later introduced yoga to the West. The foundational text for yoga is the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali. Yoga became popular as a system of physical exercise across the Western world. Yoga came to the attention of the western public in the mid 19th century along with other topics of Hindu philosophy. Yoga in Indian traditions, however, is more than physical exercise; it has a meditative and spiritual core. One of the six major orthodox schools of Hinduism is also called Yoga, which has its own epistemology and metaphysics, and is closely related to Hindu Samkhya philosophy.

Yoga as exercise is a modern exercise practice influenced by hatha yoga. It involves holding stretches as a kind of low-impact physical exercise, and is often used for therapeutic purposes. Yoga in this sense often occurs in a class and may involve meditation, imagery, breath work and music. Nearly all types of hatha yoga practices include asana, pranayama and savasana. The physical asanas of hatha yoga have a tradition that goes back to at least the 15th century, but they were not widely practiced in India prior to the early 20th century.

A hatha "yoga boom" occurred in the 1980s, as unconnected to a religious denomination. Since then, hatha yoga has been used as a supplementary exercise practice. The more classical approaches of hatha yoga, such as Iyengar yoga, move at a more deliberate pace, emphasize proper alignment and execution and hold asanas for a longer time.

They aim to gradually improve flexibility, balance, and strength other approaches, such as Ashtanga or power Yoga, shift between asanas quickly and energetically. Contemporary approaches to yoga invite students to become their own authority in yoga practice by offering principle-based approaches to yoga that can be applied to any form. For total fitness we also need strength training that works muscles against resistance and can help prevent osteoporosis, maintain mobility and prevent falls. You can do this by working out with free weights or weight machines or try the Pilates Method, a popular and intense form of strength training based on the idea that the abdominal and pelvic muscles are the body's power center.

Most people who practice yoga recognize that it isn't the only exercise they need. The same 2016 study found that more yoga practitioners are involved in other forms of exercise – including running, biking and weight lifting – than people who don't practice yoga. Additionally, some 37 percent of yoga enthusiasts also participate in some other type of group exercise.

The study found that the top five reasons people take up yoga are to:

- Gain flexibility (61 percent)
- Reduce stress (56 percent)
- Boost general fitness (49 percent)
- Improve overall health (49 percent)
- Improve overall physical fitness (44 percent).

Yoga has definitely infiltrated our society and culture. It is everywhere now, being performed and taught by persons of all ages and backgrounds. I am delighted by this trend. But it isn't the only exercise people need.

Conclusion

Yoga wasn't exactly developed to be a workout, but it does seem to have a number of benefits for the body. Past studies have looked at its physical effects, not the least of which is muscle building, bone strengthening and flexibility. There's even some evidence that it rivals aerobic exercise for heart health. Two new studies, published in the journal *Complementary*

Therapies in Medicine, find that yoga can in fact burn calories—but mostly if it's done at a faster clip. And as it turns out, there's a difference in the number of calories burned in changing poses versus holding them. In one study, the team from the University of Miami had participants do sun salutations for eight minutes, either at regular speed or faster speed. Their oxygen consumption and carbon dioxide production was measured to determine how many calories they were burning as they did the exercises. It turned out, not too surprisingly, that people when people did the faster version of the postures they burned significantly more calories than when doing them standard speed.

RESULTS:

In the studies reviewed, yoga interventions appeared to be equal or superior to exercise in nearly every outcome measured except those involving physical fitness. Clearly yoga has some pretty significant benefits, for body and mind. For the body, the practice may provide a workout and burn some calories—especially, as the two new studies have found, if you do it at a faster pace. Of course, doing it faster, and focusing on the physical aspects, may detract from its mental benefits, which are considerable. As with most things, and especially in yoga, finding the right balance is generally the trick.

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