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Yoga for Arthritis - Types of Yoga, Doctor's Tip, Exercises (Video & PDF)

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In 2007, [Dr. Badsha](#), Rheumatologist and Dr. Vishwas Chhabra, Yoga Specialist, published their findings derived from a study on the benefits of yoga for [rheumatoid arthritis](#).

Study findings on Yoga and Arthritis

Compared to a group of patients who did other forms of exercise, it was found that the group that practiced yoga **improved** significantly **in just 12 weeks**. Some were able to reduce or discontinue medications. Dr. Vishwas still holds regular classes for arthritis patients.

Following are excerpts from the [American College of Rheumatology](#) website

Science supports this mind-body activity as a good medicine for arthritis. Among the most recent evidence: Yoga reduced disability and eased swollen joints, pain and improve flexibility without causing adverse effects in thousands of study participants, according to a review of clinical trials conducted between 1980 and 2010. The study, funded in part by the Arthritis Foundation, was published in Rheumatic Disease Clinics of North America.

"Most importantly, we found that yoga does not exacerbate disease symptoms for persons with arthritis. With proper instruction, it is a safe way for people to stay active and mindful, both of which are associated with a variety of health benefits," says lead author Steffany Moonaz, PhD, a health behaviorist and yoga research consultant in Baltimore.

Types of Yoga - are they safe for you?

Viniyoga

Typically practiced in private, one-on-one sessions with a yoga instructor, who modifies various yoga poses to match your skill level, health status and fitness goals.

Vinyoga is ok for arthritis, with a qualified instructor. Look for someone who has experience with arthritis and/or other joint medical conditions.

"Because Viniyoga poses are highly adapted, they may appear quite different than they would in other yoga traditions," says [Steffany Moonaz](#), a yoga research consultant and therapist in Baltimore, Maryland.

Power Yoga

As its name suggests, Power Yoga is a vigorous and fast-paced practice that modifies poses from various practices, such as Ashtanga and Bikram, and provides a cardio workout in addition to strengthening and stretching.

Power Yoga may be ok for arthritis, though not the best. "Very fit individuals with mild arthritis might be okay with Power yoga, but most instructors will gear yoga classes toward a very active population who is aiming to get an intense workout." says Moonaz.

Vinyasa

A series of poses that are done in a row; each pose transitions into the next. This is ok with arthritis in some cases.

"Many Vinyasa classes are complex and involve a lot of weight-bearing through the hands. Look for 'Gentle Vinyasa,' which tends to be slower and is less likely to require you to support your body weight through your hands," advises Jane Foody, a New York City-based physical therapist and certified yoga instructor who works with individuals with arthritis. Adds Moonaz, "Unless you have very mild arthritis, I wouldn't recommend Vinyasa unless it's a private lesson or a small class with a well-qualified instructor who can take the time to offer proper individualized attention."

Restorative

The goal of restorative yoga is to relax, rest and restore. Poses which are held for between five and 15 minutes at a time, are done using lots of props (such as ropes and foam blocks), "so the body is completely supported and minimal or no muscular effort is necessary to maintain the posture," says Moonaz.

Unlike almost all other forms of yoga, Restorative yoga doesn't build physical fitness-but it's particularly beneficial for individuals with arthritis who are seeking to relieve stress as a way to reduce disease activity, notes Moonaz.

Ashtanga

Vigorous yoga that involves moving quickly between poses, Ashtanga is not suitable for arthritis.

"Ashtanga probably moves too quickly to be safe for this population, unless it is taught at a very basic level and significantly modified for people with arthritis," says Moonaz.

Chair Yoga

Gentle yoga poses primarily performed while seated, this technique is suitable for arthritis.

Chair yoga is ideal for seniors and those with limited mobility, says Jane Foody. Listen to your body and communicate with your yoga teacher if anything feels uncomfortable, adds Moonaz.

Hatha Yoga

A blanket term for poses commonly identified with yoga, this involves balancing and stretching in seated, standing and prone positions. Usually performed slowly, it concentrates on strengthening and reducing stress.

Hatha may be ok for arthritis, in some cases. Because class intensity varies widely, "It's always best to ask the instructor what the class involves," says Foody.

Iyengar

Props such as blocks and ropes are used to ease into poses without causing strain or injury.

This type of yoga can be practiced for arthritis. "Iyengar is well suited for people with arthritis because there is a lot of attention to individual alignment and limitations," says Moonaz. "A beginner level class is recommended so that you have the time and attention to properly adapt poses to your needs."

Doctor's Tip

Once you've found a class that's right for you, start slow, do only what feels comfortable, and if you feel any joint pain during a pose, stop doing it.

[Download the Yoga Flyer](#)

People also read: [Yoga for Arthritis: The science of Yoga](#)

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