

**Introduction:-**Yoga is an ancient and complex practice, rooted in Indian philosophy. It began as a spiritual practice but has become popular as a way of promoting physical and mental well-being.

Although classical yoga also includes other elements, yoga as practiced in the United States typically emphasizes physical postures (*asanas*), breathing techniques (*pranayama*), and meditation (*dyana*).

There are many different yoga styles, ranging from gentle practices to physically demanding ones. Differences in the types of yoga used in research studies may affect study results. This makes it challenging to evaluate research on the health effects of yoga.

Yoga and two practices of Chinese origin—tai chi and qi gong—are sometimes called “meditative movement” practices. All three practices include both meditative elements and physical ones.

- **Low-back pain.**
  - A 2020 report by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality evaluated 10 studies of yoga for low-back pain (involving 1,520 total participants) and found that yoga improved pain and function in both the short term (1 to 6 months) and intermediate term (6 to 12 months). The effects of yoga were similar to those of exercise.
  - The American College of Physicians recommends using nondrug methods for the initial treatment of chronic low-back pain. Yoga is one of several suggested nondrug approaches.
- **Neck pain.** A 2019 review of 10 studies (686 total participants) found that practicing yoga reduced both the intensity of neck pain and disability related to neck pain and improved range of motion in the neck.
- **Headaches.** A 2020 review of 6 studies (240 participants) of yoga for chronic or episodic headaches (tension-type headache or migraine) found evidence of reductions in headache frequency, headache duration, and pain intensity, with effects seen mostly in patients with tension-type headache rather than migraine. Because of the small numbers of studies and participants, as well as limitations in the quality of the studies, these results should be considered preliminary.
- **Knee osteoarthritis.**
  - A 2019 review of 9 studies (640 total participants) showed that yoga may be helpful for improving pain, function, and stiffness in people with osteoarthritis of the knee. However, the number of studies was small, and the research was not of high quality.
  - A 2019 guideline from the American College of Rheumatology and the Arthritis Foundation conditionally recommended yoga for patients with knee osteoarthritis based on similarities to tai chi, which has been better studied and is strongly recommended by the same guideline.

**History of Yoga :-** The first mention of the word “yoga” appears in *Rig Veda*, a collection of [ancient texts](#). Yoga comes from the Sanskrit word “yuj,” which means “union” or “to join.”

Yoga can be traced back to northern India over 5,000 years ago.

Indian monks spread their knowledge of yoga in the West during the late 1890s. Modern yoga teachings became widely popular in Western countries by the 1970s.

## Philosophy

The overall [philosophy](#) of yoga is about connecting the mind, body, and spirit.

There are six branches of yoga. Each branch represents a different focus and set of characteristics.

The six branches [are](#):

- **Hatha yoga:** This is the physical and mental branch that aims to prime the body and mind.

- **Raja yoga:** This branch involves meditation and strict adherence to a series of disciplinary steps known as the eight limbs of yoga.
- **Karma yoga:** This is a path of service that aims to create a future free from negativity and selfishness.
- **Bhakti yoga:** This aims to establish the path of devotion, a positive way to channel emotions and cultivate acceptance and tolerance.
- **Jnana yoga:** This branch of yoga is about wisdom, the path of the scholar, and developing the intellect through study.
- **Tantra yoga:** This is the pathway of ritual, ceremony, or consummation of a relationship.

## Chakras

The word “chakra” [means](#) “spinning wheel.”

Yoga maintains that chakras are center points of energy, thoughts, feelings, and the physical body. According to yogic teachers, chakras determine how people experience reality through emotional reactions, desires or aversions, levels of confidence or fear, and even physical symptoms and effects.

When energy becomes blocked in a chakra, it triggers physical, mental, or emotional imbalances that manifest in symptoms such as [anxiety](#), [lethargy](#), or poor [digestion](#).

Asanas are the many physical poses in Hatha yoga. People who practice yoga use asanas to free energy and stimulate an imbalanced chakra.

There are seven major chakras, each with its own [focus](#):

- **Sahasrara:** The crown chakra, which is at the crown of the head, symbolizes spiritual connection.
- **Ajna:** Located between the eyebrows, the third eye chakra has to do with intuition.
- **Vishuddha:** The throat chakra corresponds to immunity and verbal communication.
- **Anahata:** The heart chakra, which is in the center of the chest, influences professional and personal relationships. Any imbalances in this chakra will affect oxygen, [hormones](#), tissue, and organ control.
- **Manipura:** The solar plexus chakra is in the stomach area. It corresponds to self-confidence, wisdom, and self-discipline.
- **Svadhishthana:** The sacral chakra, which is beneath the belly button, connects pleasure, well-being, and vitality.
- **Muladhara:** The root chakra, which is at the base of the spine, connects the mind and body to the earth to keep a person grounded. It controls the sciatic nerves and the parasympathetic nervous system.

## Types

Modern yoga focuses on exercise, strength, agility, and breathing. It [can help](#)[Trusted Source](#) boost physical and mental well-being.

There are many styles of yoga. A person should choose a style based on their goals and fitness level.

Types and styles of yoga [include](#):

### Ashtanga yoga

This type of yoga practice uses ancient yoga teachings. However, it became popular during the 1970s.

Ashtanga applies the same poses and sequences that rapidly link every movement to breath.

## **Bikram yoga**

People practice Bikram yoga, also known as hot yoga, in artificially heated rooms at a temperature of nearly 105°F and 40% humidity. It consists of 26 poses and a sequence of two breathing exercises.

## **Hatha yoga**

This is a generic term for any type of yoga that teaches physical poses. Hatha classes usually serve as a gentle introduction to the basic poses of yoga.

## **Iyengar yoga**

This type of yoga practice focuses on finding the correct alignment in each pose with the help of a range of props, such as blocks, blankets, straps, chairs, and bolsters.

## **Kripalu yoga**

This type teaches practitioners to know, accept, and learn from the body. A student of Kripalu yoga learns to find their own level of practice by looking inward.

The classes usually begin with breathing exercises and gentle stretches, followed by a series of individual poses and final relaxation.

## **Kundalini yoga**

Kundalini yoga is a system of meditation that aims to release pent-up energy.

A Kundalini yoga class typically begins with chanting and ends with singing. In between, it features asana, pranayama, and meditation that aim to create a specific outcome.

## **Power yoga**

In the late 1980s, practitioners developed this active and athletic type of yoga based on the traditional Ashtanga system.

## **Sivananda**

This system uses a five point philosophy as its foundation.

This philosophy maintains that proper breathing, relaxation, diet, exercise, and positive thinking work together to create a healthy yogic lifestyle.

People practicing Sivananda use 12 basic asanas, which they precede with Sun Salutations and follow with Savasana.

## **Viniyoga**

Viniyoga [focuses](#) on form over function, breath and adaptation, repetition and holding, and the art and science of sequencing.

## **Yin yoga**

Yin yoga places its [focus](#) on holding passive poses for long periods of time. This style of yoga targets deep tissues, ligaments, joints, bones, and fascia.

## Prenatal yoga

Prenatal yoga uses poses that practitioners have created with pregnant people in mind. This yoga style can help people get back into shape after giving birth, and support health during pregnancy.

## Restorative yoga

This is a relaxing method of yoga. A person spends a restorative yoga class in four or five simple poses, using props such as blankets and bolsters to sink into deep relaxation without exerting any effort when holding the pose.

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## Benefits of yoga

According to a [2012 surveyTrusted Source](#), 94% of adults who practice yoga do so for wellness reasons.

Yoga has many physical and mental benefits, [includingTrusted Source](#):

- building muscle strength
- enhancing flexibility
- promoting better breathing
- supporting heart health
- helping with treatment for [addiction](#)
- reducing [stress](#), anxiety, [depression](#), and chronic [pain](#)
- improving [sleep](#)
- enhancing overall well-being and quality of life

It is advisable to consult a medical professional, if possible, before starting a yoga practice.

## Risks and side effects

Many types of yoga are relatively mild and therefore safe for people when a well-trained instructor is guiding the practice.

It is [rareTrusted Source](#) to incur a serious injury when doing yoga. The most common injuries among people practicing yoga are [sprains](#) and strains.

However, people may wish to consider a few [risk factorsTrusted Source](#) before starting a yoga practice.

A person who is pregnant or has an ongoing medical condition, such as bone loss, [glaucoma](#), or [sciatica](#), should consult a healthcare professional, if possible, before taking up yoga.

Some people may need to modify or avoid some yoga poses that could be risky given their specific condition.

Beginners should avoid advanced poses and difficult techniques, such as Headstand, Lotus Pose, and forceful breathing.

When managing a condition, people should not replace conventional medical care with yoga or postpone seeing a healthcare professional about pain or any other medical problem.