

# The Health Benefits of Yoga for Aging Adults

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# Overview

- Long-time interest/ practice of yoga
- Growing numbers of older adults (percentage and absolute)
- Aging process capable of being affected by mind-body therapies
- \$78 million spent by NIH looking at benefits of complementary and alternative (CAM) therapies
- Yoga is increasingly popular

- What research exists focusing on the health benefits of aging adults?
- -Overview of common beliefs held about the effects of yoga
- -Theories of aging
- -History and philosophy of yoga

# Methods

- Literary review
- Read and reviewed over 120 articles using multiple databases
  - Highlight 26 significant studies
- Read 5 books on yoga as an overview
  - Focus on anatomy, physiology, history, “over 50”, practical

## Results: 7 Articles on Yoga and Older Adults

- Poststroke - ↑ balance and mobility (2004)
- Hyperkyphosis – ↑ strength, flexibility, attention to alignment (2002)
- ↑ balance control – ↓ fall risk (1999)
- Carpal tunnel syndrome - ↓ pain, ↑ grip strength (1998)
- ↓ heart rate and ↑ VO2 max (1997)
- Psychological functioning (1991)
- Yoga as preventive health care for elders (1983)
- Other areas of yoga study with implications for the elderly: arthritis, osteoporosis, cardiovascular

Greendale, G, McDivit, A, Carpenter, A, Seeger, L., Huang, Mei-Hua. (2002).  
**Yoga for Women with Hyperkyphosis: Results of a Pilot Study.**  
*American Journal of Public Health, 92(10), 1611-1614.*

(a) Recumbent spine extension stretch



(b) Hands and knees



(c) Prone forearm



(d) Standing pose



Note. The program consisted of progressive series of poses that built on one another. The sequence from each series is shown. (a) The first series was recumbent, which included lying, hip stretching, and breathing exercises. (b) The second series included lying on the stomach, back, and side, and movements of the arms, legs, and shoulders. (c) The third series included, with an emphasis on breathing and control of breathing between series, core and back, and coordination movements of the arms, legs, and shoulders. (d) The fourth series included standing poses, including arm and leg poses, that focused on strength, flexibility, and balance.

FIGURE 3—Overview of yoga series and examples of poses.

# Rewards and Challenges

- Learn to let a question evolve while maintaining focus
- Learn how to more effectively conduct and focus an electronic search
- Unavailability of some applicable international resources
- Increased appreciation and knowledge about both yoga and the elderly population
- Excitement about future research

THANK YOU!