



What Yoga Can Do For You

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For those who aren't familiar with Yoga, it may seem a bit intimidating, or even a bit foreign. Actually, anyone can do yoga, and everyone can benefit from it. In its most basic sense, yoga is an exercise that develops flexibility, strength, balance, and mental focus.

Yoga classes are made up of a series of "poses", or positions that challenge the body in different ways. These challenges force the body to adapt, and get stronger, more flexible, and develop better balance.

In yoga, muscle strength is developed both by moving into and out of the poses, and by holding the poses. For example, moving from a pose called the downward dog into the upward dog is much the same as doing push-ups. Moving into a bow pose requires squeezing the gluteal muscles and working the back, shoulder and arms.

When holding poses, muscles get worked in a different way. If we use the warrior pose as an example, the legs are in a lunge position while the arms are stretched out to the sides. Holding this position for more than 30 seconds will start to challenge the muscle and thus, create strength.

Flexibility is developed through yoga because in each pose, while certain muscles are being tightened, the opposite muscles are being stretched. With continuing yoga practice, the muscles will get lengthened and more flexible due to the stretches that are naturally involved in the poses.

Yoga develops good balance because poses often involve standing on one leg, standing in a twist position, or even balancing on the hands in some way. The more one practices yoga, the better ones balance becomes.

Yoga enhances mental focus because throughout the practice one must always think about the body position and much focus is needed to do the pose correctly. Often a yoga practice will involve breathing in and out at specific times during the movement. This type of breathing creates a meditative effect, which also enhances mental focus.

If you're looking for a different exercise, give yoga a try. The benefits you'll experience might surprise you, and you'll find it's not so foreign after all!

It's recommended that you talk to your doctor before starting to workout. This is basic exercise information for the general public. If you have injuries or other physical limitations, this exercise may not be appropriate. A good rule of thumb: If it doesn't feel good- don't do it!

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