



Six Reasons To Take Up Yoga Now

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Whether you're looking to take up a new hobby, want to make positive changes to your health regime, or are simply looking for an excuse to get out of the house, yoga could be the solution you've been looking for. Here are some benefits:

1. Releases Tension

If you've ever found yourself with a sore back or aching shoulders from being hunched over a desk all day, yoga could be the release you need. It offers a huge array of stretches to improve mobility and release tension throughout the body. Shoulder flossing is one example of a technique that most of us in office jobs could benefit from implementing on a daily basis. This simple stretching technique mobilises the entire shoulder joint throughout its entire range of motion. It does this by freeing up space behind the joint - a heavily congested area associated with neck and thoracic spine stiffness if not managed correctly. Regular stretching improves flexibility which in turn reduces the chances of overuse injuries and injury through muscular strain. Maintaining a good level of flexibility will certainly help you stay healthy, not to mention independent, later in life.

2. Boosts Immunity

Spending a little time each day practicing gentle yoga has been proven to lower stress levels, which in turn gives your body space to breathe and recover, instead of working around the clock. Deep breathing during yoga ensures enough oxygen is being sent to the parts of your body that need it most, whilst many of the poses increase blood flow to the sinuses, helping to ease congestion.

3. Increases Brain Function

Studies have found that experiencing a meditative state through practicing yoga can thicken the cerebral cortex – the part of the brain that controls awareness, attention, memory, thoughts and language – when practiced over a long period of time. Exercising the brain through meditation in this way is shown to improve brain performance in those key cerebral cortex areas and aids learning new skills. So, in essence, yoga could actually make you smarter.

4. Beats Bloating

Ever wished there was a quick way to relieve bloating? Yoga poses can be used to reduce bloating quickly and efficiently. Activities that improve blood circulation and stretch out the body will help to release the build-up of gas and fluids in the body. Simple yoga poses

can prove very effective for this. Try lying on your back and hugging your knees into your chest to achieve a nice stretch and get that circulation moving.

5. Improves Breathing

Humans aren't designed to be sat down for a significant part of our day and as such those of behind desks are more prone to a collapsed posture, therefore not taking full breaths. Breathing deeply has a huge impact on our bodies and brains, so it's important to ensure we're doing it correctly. Practicing yoga stretches out the body, opening the chest area to allow for full, deep breaths and a healthy intake of oxygen. Practicing regularly strengthens the lungs and improves posture for a better quality of respiration, even when away from the mat. Breathing from the diaphragm – a technique practised within yoga – has also been shown to unlock localised spinal stiffness.

6. Sweats Out Impurities

Sweating through exercise is a good way to cleanse the skin of nasties, so why not take it to the next level with hot yoga, like Bikram or Vinyasa, to up the ante? Practicing at a higher temperature demands more energy and encourages the body to sweat more, which has fantastic detoxifying benefits as it removes toxins, grime and bacteria from the pores. It also stimulates blood flow to the skin cells which in turn gives the skin a natural, radiant glow.

So, there you have it – grab a mat, get signed up and start your yoga journey. There are plenty of different types of yoga so you're sure to find a style that suits your individual needs. Call into your local health club or gym to find out what yoga classes are available.

Steven Virtue is the Fitness Experience Manager at [Total Fitness](#), the North's leading mid-market health club.

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