

Yoga for Mental Health

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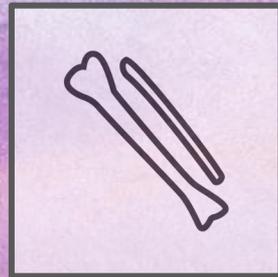
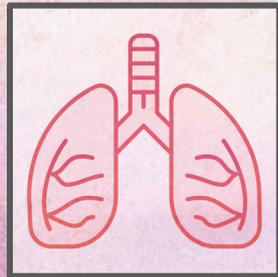
What is Yoga?

- Yoga originated in India over 3,000 years ago as a holistic practice that unites the mind, body, and breath
- It includes physical postures, breathing techniques, meditation, and relaxation
- Regular practice enhances flexibility, strength, endurance, and balance
- Yoga also promotes self-awareness, boosts energy levels, and helps reduce stress



What are some health benefits of Yoga?

- Supports **heart health** and **lowers blood pressure** by reducing stress
- Regulates the stress response by activating the parasympathetic nervous system, which **lowers cortisol levels** and promotes relaxation
- Regular stretching through yoga poses helps **strengthen muscles** and **improve joint mobility**, which decreases the risk of falls or injuries
- Physical activity can help **manage weight**, which is important to decrease the likelihood of Type II Diabetes, stroke, and heart attack
- Low-impact poses can **alleviate chronic pain** by strengthening muscles and improving flexibility
- Breathing techniques can **improve respiratory function** by increasing breathing capacity, strengthening respiratory muscles, and promoting more oxygen exchange



How can Yoga improve your mental health?

Reduces Stress and Helps you Relax

Yoga practices, particularly breathing exercises and postures, stimulate the parasympathetic nervous system, which is responsible for the body's "rest and digest" response. This helps counteract the "fight-or-flight" response triggered by stress, leading to a sense of calmness and relaxation

Enhances Emotional Regulation

Mindfulness and breathwork improves awareness and control over emotional responses, reducing symptoms of anxiety and depression

Promotes Sleep and Restorative States

Yoga can improve sleep quality and duration, which in turn supports cognitive function.

Improves Coping Skills

The structure of regular practice reinforces a sense of agency, body awareness, and resilience to psychological stressors.

Provides Mental Clarity

Yoga increases the amount of connections between brain cells, which can improve focus, concentration, memory, and attention



What conditions can benefit from Yoga?

1. **Anxiety**

Controlled breathing slows respiration and creates a direct calming effect on the central nervous system

2. **Depression**

Reduces symptoms by improving mood regulation, lowering cortisol, and increasing serotonin levels

3. **Insomnia**

Practicing meditation can help quiet mental chatter and intrusive thoughts common in insomnia. Yoga can also regulate circadian rhythms

4. **PTSD**

Yoga can help individuals with PTSD reconnect with their bodies and potentially reduce the impact of traumatic memories

5. **ADHD**

Improves focus, impulse control, and self-regulation, particularly in children and adolescents, when used with mindfulness

