

HEALTHY
SL FAMILIES

Yoga

YOGA: The word yoga originates from a Sanskrit word meaning “union.” It’s the practice of physical postures or poses that can be done in rapid successions to create a flow of heat through the body or held to promote balance and stamina. It creates a connection between body, mind, and spirit, with an emphasis on breathing and relaxation.

for the Soul

HOW SUGAR LAND STRETCHES INTO SHAPE

Written by Christy Richardson Collins

The environment is warm and bustling in Amy Levin’s Bikram Yoga studio. She greets everyone by name as they come through the door. They’re all excited to be in the studio, and there is a positive flow of energy that you can feel in the air and see on everyone’s face.

A Mental and Physical Boost

There are many reasons people choose yoga. It’s a way to gain fitness and flexibility, and for that reason, many workout veterans will add yoga to their routine as another component of wellness. Doctors may sometimes suggest yoga for certain conditions in addition to medication. “Yoga can have benefits similar to physical therapy,” says Noopur Das, a yoga instructor at the Fort Bend YMCA and the Vedyoga Center.

Gina Benincasa, the Service Manager for 24 Hour Fitness on Hwy. 90A, finds that her clients go to class to relieve stress and find balance for their work and home lives. “People love it so much they’ll follow their instructors around from studio to studio,” says Benincasa. “At the end of a class, you feel lighter and cleaner,” says Levin. “Weight loss comes not only from the exercise, but people become more aware of what they are putting in their bodies,” she adds. Das feels that yoga is particularly suited for women and should be a part of a woman’s life. “I have two children. When I started yoga I found at the end of the day I was not tired and I was able to manage my home, but I also had enough energy and strength to take care of myself,” says Das. This mental and physical boost can be attractive to mothers who feel overwhelmed with the rigors of daily child rearing.

Types Of Yoga

There are many different variations in yoga. Some yoga classes are gentle and introduce poses slowly, and sometimes props are used to make sure the poses are held correctly for a minute or longer. Other classes are faster paced, with a specific set of poses meant to be done in quick successions. Other times the focus is on breathing or on balancing each pose with a counter pose. A number of gyms will have a blended yoga and pilates class that focuses on strength and flexibility. Other studios take an entire body and healing approach, like Ayurveda. Ayurveda treatments combine herbs and spiritual and physical tools like meditation, yoga, and massage. There are also specialized instructors for prenatal yoga that present modified moves and stretches for the pregnant body. You can also find classes for children.

One very popular form of yoga is Bikram, or “hot” yoga. The name is accurate as the room is heated to 105 degrees, and the humidity stays around 35 percent. This type of yoga is a series of 26 stretching postures and breathing exercises taught in a 90-minute class. Heating the room creates many benefits including warming the muscles to get a deeper stretch, flushing toxins out of the body via sweat, and burning additional calories. Your skin is your largest organ and the heat in Bikram Yoga allows your skin to loosen and stretch more. Whatever class you decide to take, there will be some elements of stretching, breathing exercises, poses, meditation, and possibly martial arts.

Getting Started

To get started Levin suggests, “Get hydrated early. Start drinking more water than usual a couple of days before class, and don’t be scared. Nobody is looking at you.” Even though it’s in a group, the teacher at Bikram does not practice with you. They work with you to make sure the poses are done correctly. “This gives the added benefit of one on one attention,” explains Levin. As you become more involved, it’s better to wear tighter fitting clothing because of the emphasis on stretching. It’s easier for instructors and yourself to see if the pose is being done effectively.

“As a mother of two, this is all I have done. I feel great and have gotten into shape,” says Levin. “I need ‘me time’ and yoga is a way for me to stay fit while also nurturing my emotional health,” says Mallory Salter, a Sugar Land mother. With benefits like that, yoga is certainly worth a try. **SLM**

CHRISTY RICHARDSON COLLINS has two little girls ages three and twenty months. She is expecting her third child, a boy, in April. Yoga would benefit her greatly.

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Yoga improves strength and flexibility

YOGA TRAINING RESOURCES

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Bikram Yoga Sugar Land

Lakeside Plaza Shopping
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Adho Mukha Svanasana is also known
as the downward facing dog pose



Yoga involves the whole body in stretching
instead of focusing on isolated areas

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