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More Health Benefits of Yoga



Last issue we reviewed some of the more obvious health benefits of Yoga, such as developing your flexibility, strength, and balance, and increasing range of motion in joints. Here are some more benefits that you may not be aware of:

☞ With increased flexibility and strength comes better posture and increased body awareness. This heightened awareness tells you more quickly when you're slouching or slumping so you can adjust your posture.

☞ Because of the deep, mindful breathing that yoga involves, lung capacity often improves. Most forms of yoga emphasize deepening and lengthening your breath. This stimulates the relaxation response -- the opposite of the fight-or-flight adrenaline boost of the stress response.

☞ Even beginners tend to feel less stressed and more relaxed after their first class. Among yoga's anti-stress benefits are a host of biochemical responses. For example, there is a decrease in catecholamines, the hormones produced by the adrenal glands in response to stress. Lowering levels of hormone neurotransmitters -- dopamine, norepinephrine, and epinephrine -- creates a feeling of calm.

☞ Perhaps one of the most studied areas of the health benefits of yoga is its effect on heart disease. Yoga has long been known to lower blood pressure and slow the heart rate. A slower heart rate can benefit people with hypertension, heart disease, and stroke. On a biochemical level, studies point to a possible anti-oxidant effect of yoga. And yoga has been associated with decreased cholesterol and triglyceride levels as well as a boost in immune system function.

☞ Some researchers believe that yoga may have a positive effect on learning and memory, as well as slowing the aging process, increasing a person's sense of self-acceptance, improving energy levels.

Heart-Healthy

Valentine's Day Tips

from the American Heart Association



Help yourself and your loved ones to stay Heart-Healthy with these tips:

- ♥ Stay hydrated - staying properly hydrated helps you feel (and look) better and water is a great alternative to high-calorie, sugar-sweetened drinks. Treat yourself to a fun new water bottle to encourage the habit - if it's always handy, you're more likely to drink up.
- ♥ Get active inside - winter is almost over, but there are plenty of ways to get moving indoors that don't involve a gym membership; start mall walking, hit the stairs at work, or check out a yoga video from the public library or your local video store.
- ♥ Know before you go - make it a point next time you go out to eat to look up the nutrition information for the restaurant you're going to (most major chains have this online) and note the nutrition information for what you plan or usually order. Just knowing what you're eating is a good step in the right direction.
- ♥ Make a change - pick one small thing you can change about your daily diet - start buying skim milk, order the nonfat latte, skip the afternoon vending machine visit or add an extra veggie to your dinner plate.
- ♥ Snacking isn't bad if done in moderation and eating a little throughout the day can actually keep you from overdoing it at meal times.
- ♥ You can make many of your favorite recipes healthier by using lower-fat or no-fat ingredients. These healthy substitutions can help you cut down on saturated fats, *trans* fats and cholesterol, while noticing little, if any, difference in taste.
- ♥ Whether cooking or making dressings, use the oils that are lowest in saturated fats, *trans* fats and cholesterol - such as canola oil, corn oil, olive oil, safflower oil, sesame oil, soybean oil and sunflower oil - but use them sparingly, because they contain 120 calories per tablespoon.

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"Our Healing Place" for your holistic health and wellness needs!**

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Only \$5.00 per class or \$8.00 for both days!**