

Yoga for Life

BENEFITS FOR MIND AND BODY

By Janet Hennard

You've probably heard that yoga is increasing in popularity among people 50+, and for good reason! Besides increased flexibility and strength there's much more:

Improved Sleep

As we age, certain biological changes can make a

good night's sleep more problematic. This may include changes in the body's circadian rhythm, the 24-hour internal clock regulating sleep patterns. Yoga and meditation activate the parasympathetic nervous system, calming the body and mind. Many yoga students find they

sleep better after just the first class or two!

Strong Bones

Many standing yoga postures help increase your balance, resulting in fewer falls. At the same time, those poses help to build bone density. Clinical studies have shown that, in some cases of osteoporosis, yoga can actually reverse the process of bone loss!

Healthy Immune System

A surprising benefit of yoga is its positive effect on the immune system, with clinicians suggesting a change at the molecular level that occurs *immediately* during practice. In other words, yoga is a great way to keep your immune system healthy, possibly resulting in fewer colds, flu and other bacterial or viral infections.

Improved Mood

One of the most striking benefits of yoga is its positive effect on our mental well-being. Multiple clinical studies have shown significant improvement in depression and anxiety with yoga and meditation. Perhaps it's not just the practice itself, but also the sense of community we experience in our classes, making us feel better as we make friends and know we are not alone. ▶



Getting the most from your yoga class

- ▶ Look for descriptions like gentle, chair, senior, and restorative yoga or meditation.
- ▶ Before class, inform your instructor about your physical limitations, illness or treatments.
- ▶ Look for qualified teachers through Yoga Alliance at yogaalliance.org or the International Association of Yoga Therapists at iaiyt.org.
- ▶ Consider private lessons to ease into taking studio classes, or when recovering from illness or surgery.



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