

# 5 things to know about yoga

Yoga typically combines physical postures, breathing exercises, and meditation or relaxation. Researchers are studying how yoga may be used to help improve health and to learn more about its safe use. If you're thinking about practicing yoga, here are 5 things you should know from the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine:

1. Studies suggest that yoga may be beneficial for a number of conditions. Recent studies in people with chronic low-back pain suggest that a carefully adapted set of yoga poses can help reduce pain and improve function. Other studies also suggest that practicing yoga (as well as other forms of regular exercise) might have other health benefits such as reducing heart rate and blood pressure, and may also help relieve anxiety and depression.
2. Research suggests that yoga is not helpful for asthma, and studies looking at yoga and arthritis have had mixed results.
3. Yoga is generally considered to be safe in healthy people when practiced appropriately. However, people with high blood pressure, glaucoma, or sciatica, and women who are pregnant should modify or avoid some yoga poses.
4. Practice safely and mindfully. Everyone's body is different, and yoga postures should be modified based on individual abilities. Inform your instructor about any medical issues you have, and ask about the physical demands of yoga.
5. Talk to your doctor about any complementary health practices you use, including yoga. Give them a full picture of what you do to manage your health. This will help ensure coordinated and safe care.

