

Yoga for Health and Wellness

*“Yoga is the golden key that unlocks the door to peace, tranquility and joy.” —
BKS Iyengar*

1. INTRODUCTION

Yoga is an ancient Indian discipline that helps to achieve a physical and mental well-being. If regularly practiced, yoga helps to maintain and improve a practitioner’s health. The benefits of yoga are achieved through adherence to good ethical principles and personal conduct, physical postures (asanas), breathing (pranayama), control of the senses, concentration of the mind, meditation and absorption in the Infinite (Samadhi).

The yoga exercises need to be approached gently and nonviolently with a proper state of mind. The purpose of yoga is not to “whip” the body into shape, but rather build a strong and healthy body gradually. Always move gracefully into a position and never strain or pull violently. Use your breath and concentration to allow the body to move gracefully from one position to another. It takes time for the body to become limber; observe your body and appreciate even a small progress, always be positive.

Use common sense and caution in your approach to yoga and never exceed your limitation; pull back if a position does not feel right--listen to your own body. Proceed moderately with an awareness of your own capabilities and limitations and you will be successful and happy with your progress and results.

Be “present” at each practice, asana, and breath and observe the effect the poses have on your body and mind. In yoga, we try to realize how beautiful and happy we really are, practice yoga with this aim. Concentrate on the rhythm of your breathing to still the mind and prevent distracting thoughts.

Breathing is an important aspect of yoga. Breathe through the nose. As you breathe in, feel the body filling up with energy, light, health and happiness. As you breathe out, feel all you impurities, illnesses, negativity, hatred and violence leave the body and mind.

Progress in yoga comes through systematic daily discipline- practice regularly every day. Yoga should not be a burden, you should enjoy it, but it takes initial commitment and dedication before it becomes satisfying. Build your own practice by initially selecting a couple of exercises to do daily, best in the morning on an empty stomach; with time your repertoire will expand.

Do not consume food for at least 2 ½ hours before practicing yoga. Water can be drunk about 30 minutes before doing yoga, but not during the class.

Minor aches and soreness develop initially when one is not used to the exercises. Do not be alarmed. If however, these aches become persistent let me know.

Build helpful interaction with your teacher. Yoga classes should be an interaction between you and the teacher. Let me know if you have difficulties with a pose or ask for an alternative pose. Your feedback, positive or negative, is important to a teacher to develop a better class.

2. HOME PRACTICE

During your own home practice you learn to move at your own pace, listen and respond to your body, and develop greater consistency and frequency of your yoga practice. Practicing on your own empowers you and gives you freedom to explore. The OLLI classes are designed to teach you how to develop at home yoga sequence that you can practice on a daily basis.

Chanting Mantra:

Om (3x), Om Namah Shivaayo, Shivaayo Namah Om (4 repetitions)