

Manage your stress with yoga and relaxation

When we face a stressful situation, our body naturally responds by releasing cortisol (the stress hormone) from the adrenal glands. Yoga has been demonstrated to reduce cortisol levels, which can help you get a handle on stress and bring more peacefulness into your life. The practice of yoga includes breathing, meditation, and poses that stretch the body. By combining these physical and mental exercises many people feel a “oneness” and a higher awareness that is very relaxing and invigorating.

It all starts with the breath

Yoga breathing can be described as a conscious breath through the nose only. This can aid in calming the mind and reducing both blood pressure and stress. Learning proper breathing techniques not only helps in yoga postures but in daily life as well. It forces you to slow down and deepen your breath, which activates the body’s relaxation response.

You can practice yoga anywhere

One of the great benefits of yoga is that it can be done with minimal equipment, even at home! You can search online for yoga resources, or you can find beginner’s yoga instruction books and DVDs at the library or sporting goods store. You can also join a yoga studio or take a yoga class in your local community. Want to give it a try? You can get started right now with the Child’s Pose.

The basic “Child’s Pose” in three easy steps

1. Begin on all fours with the knees slightly apart and your toes pointing behind you, big toes touching.
2. As you sit back, try to bring your hips all the way to your heels while you lengthen your arms in front of you. Pull the shoulders down and back, keeping them away from your ears. Allow your chest to rest between your thighs and your forehead to rest on the floor.
3. Inhale as you lengthen the spine and exhale as you widen the knees and fall deeper into the pose.



RESOURCE: American Council on Exercise

DISCLAIMER: If you have a health condition, talk to your doctor or certified yoga instructor before you start a yoga program. Doing yoga should not cause pain. If you feel any pain when you do these poses, stop. Talk to a yoga instructor about how to modify the pose. Or ask him or her to teach you a different pose that does not cause pain.

Resources: Healthwise, American Council on Exercise, American College of Sports Medicine

Call your health coach if you have questions.