

Weekly yoga class yields similar lower back pain relief as two classes

July 2 2013

Researchers at Boston University School of Medicine (BUSM) and Boston Medical Center (BMC) have found that a weekly yoga class provided similar lower back pain relief and reduced the need for pain medication as twice weekly classes in lower income minority patients. The results of the study indicate that patients interested in trying yoga for lower back pain could benefit from attending a medically appropriate weekly yoga class.

The study, published in *Evidence-Based Complementary and Alternative Medicine*, was led by first author Robert Saper, MD, MPH, associate professor of family medicine at BUSM and director of integrative medicine at BMC.

While previous studies have shown that yoga can be an effective treatment for chronic [lower back pain](#), few studies have studied this among specific populations.

"Lower income patients often have worse lower back pain due to limited access to both mainstream health care treatments and complementary treatments such as yoga, massage and acupuncture," said Saper.

In this 12-week randomized trial, 95 predominantly low-income adults suffering from moderate to severe lower back pain were divided into two groups. One group attended [yoga class](#) once a week and the other attended twice a week, and both groups were encouraged to practice the poses and techniques at home. At the end of the 12 weeks, both groups

of participants experienced similar and substantial decreases in their pain level and need for [pain medications](#), but there was no additional benefit seen in those attending twice a week. Also, their ability to perform daily functions improved.

"Given the similar improvement seen in once weekly yoga classes, and that once a week is more convenient and less expensive, we recommend patients suffering from lower back pain who want to pursue yoga attend a weekly therapeutic yoga class," said Saper.

Provided by Boston University Medical Center

Citation: Weekly yoga class yields similar lower back pain relief as two classes (2013, July 2) retrieved 19 November 2023 from

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