

Yoga improves health in later life, study says

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Older adults who practice yoga are more likely to be in better mental and physical shape, research suggests.

Yoga improves physical function as well as mental wellbeing in [healthy adults](#) over the age of 60, the study found.

The physical benefits of yoga—an ancient practice that includes the use of postures and regulated breathing—were found to include better muscle strength, balance and flexibility.

Boosts to health

Boosts to [mental health](#) included improvement in the symptoms of depression, sleep quality and vitality in [older adults](#).

Researchers at the University reviewed 22 studies that had investigated the effects of yoga on physical and mental wellbeing in older adults. The yoga programmes varied in length from one month to seven months, and duration of sessions ranged from 30 to 90 minutes.

Statistical analysis combined the results of the studies to see the effects of yoga compared with no activity, and compared to other activities such as walking and chair aerobics.

Physical improvements

The researchers found that people who practiced yoga had improved balance, flexibility, leg strength, depression, sleep quality, vitality and perceived mental and physical health—compared with no activity.

Compared with other activities yoga improved lower body strength, lower body flexibility and depression.

Researchers say the review improves understanding of the benefits yoga can offer an aging population. They say it provides evidence for promoting yoga in physical activity guidelines for older adults.

"A large proportion of older adults are inactive, and do not meet the balance and muscle strengthening recommendations set by government

and international health organizations. Based on this study, we can conclude that [yoga](#) has [great potential](#) to improve important physical and psychological outcomes in older adults. Yoga is a gentle activity that can be modified to suit those with age-related conditions and diseases," says Divya Sivaramakrishnan of the Physical Activity for Health Research Centre.

More information: Divya Sivaramakrishnan et al. The effects of yoga compared to active and inactive controls on physical function and health related quality of life in older adults- systematic review and meta-analysis of randomised controlled trials, *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity* (2019). [DOI: 10.1186/s12966-019-0789-2](#)

Provided by University of Edinburgh

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