



STAYING HEALTHY

Yoga Injury Prevention

An increasing number of Americans are turning to yoga for exercise and relaxation, as well as relief of bone, joint, and muscle-related pain. Although yoga does offer many health benefits, if it is practiced incorrectly, it may cause muscle strain, torn ligaments, or more serious injuries.

The American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons (AAOS) believes the rewards of basic yoga outweigh the potential physical risks, as long as you take caution and perform the exercises in moderation, according to your individual flexibility level. These rewards include improved strength, balance, and flexibility, as well as improved sense of well-being. Yoga may also be beneficial for certain bone and joint problems like carpal tunnel syndrome, tennis elbow, and arthritis.

Be aware that whether yoga enthusiasts are just stretching or assuming specific positions, serious muscle damage and related injuries can result if they do not take the proper precautions, especially for people with pre-existing musculoskeletal ailments or conditions.

According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, there were more than 7,369 yoga-related injuries treated in doctors' offices, clinics, and emergency rooms in 2010. Common yoga injuries include repetitive strain to and overstretching of the neck, shoulders, spine, legs, and knees.

There are many things you can do to help prevent yoga-related injuries.

- If you have any medical conditions or injuries, speak to your doctor before participating in yoga.
- Work with a qualified yoga instructor. Ask about his or her experience and credentials.
- Discuss any known illness or injury with your yoga instructor prior to the class so that he or she can recommend pose modifications.
- Learn what type of yoga you are performing. There are hundreds of different forms of yoga, some more strenuous than others. It is important to learn which type of yoga will best suit your needs.
- Select the class level that is appropriate for you. Beginners should start slowly and learn the basics first -- such as breathing -- rather than trying to stretch too far.
- Wear appropriate clothing that allows for proper movement.
- Warm up thoroughly before a yoga session -- cold muscles, tendons, and ligaments are vulnerable to injury.
- If you are unsure of a pose or movement, ask questions.



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- Know your limits. Do not try positions beyond your experience or comfort level.
- Keep hydrated by drinking plenty of fluids, especially if participating in Bikram or " hot " yoga.
- Listen to your body. If you are experiencing pain or exhaustion while participating in yoga, stop or take a break. If pain persists, talk to your doctor.

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