

Benefits Of Yoga For Type 2 Diabetes

WHAT IS YOGA?

Yoga is widely known as a type of exercise focusing on postures and relaxation techniques that aid in stress relief and flexibility. However, it involves more than just physical poses, and was originally developed with the intention of enriching the body, mind and spirit.

Our Purpose

Our purpose is to be a global facilitator of health and wellness through access, education and advancement of Traditional & Complementary Medicine (T&CM). The World Health Organization (WHO) advises that lifestyle-related diseases (or non-communicable diseases) are responsible for more than 70% of deaths worldwide each year.

Knowledge represents empowerment. By sharing this evidence-based, peer-reviewed research, we aim to support everyday people to take ownership of their wellness, by making informed decisions and choices in conjunction with their health professional.

How This Study Could Help You Manage Type 2 Diabetes

In Australia, it is estimated that 85-90% of people who have diabetes suffer from type 2 diabetes, which typically affects those who are physically inactive and overweight. This review of controlled trials investigates the possible benefits of yoga for the management of type 2 diabetes, and is titled:

YOGA FOR ADULTS WITH TYPE 2 DIABETES: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF CONTROLLED TRIALS.

You can read the full study here: https://www.hindawi.com/journals/jdr/2016/6979370/

Why Is This Study Important?

Poorly controlled diabetes can lead to elevated levels of sugar in the blood (or blood glucose levels). Chronically high levels of blood glucose are associated with damage to the eyes, kidneys and nervous system, as well as heart disease. According to statistics quoted by the authors of this study, at least 65% of the deaths of those who suffer from type 2 diabetes are caused by cardiovascular disease.

Blood lipids are several types of fats in the blood, which include cholesterol and triglycerides. Type 2 diabetes is associated with abnormal levels of blood lipids, which can cause fatty deposits to build up in blood vessels, potentially causing heart failure or stroke. Oxidative stress, or an imbalance between free radicals and antioxidants in the body, is both a risk factor for type 2 diabetes and a result of the disease. It may lead to chronic inflammation of blood vessels, and worsen insulin resistance.

Finding evidence for an effective and sustainable mind/body practice that may help control these diverse consequences of type 2 diabetes could offer a valuable way for average people to manage their condition.

What Does This Mean For My Wellness?

There is evidence to suggest that yoga may help you shift away from imbalanced activity of your sympathetic nervous system, which is responsible for the 'fight or flight' response. Since nervous system imbalance is associated with insulin resistance and lipid imbalance - identified as risk factors for type 2 diabetes – the study suggested practising yoga may help you avoid developing the disease in the first place.

For those living with type 2 diabetes, the research indicates that yoga includes techniques which can be practised at home for improved management of the condition. The authors identified quality of sleep and associated psychological health as having a role in the development and progression of diabetes. While there has been limited study of the effects of yoga on the sleep quality of those with diabetes, one of the studies reviewed found that a deep relaxation practice called yoga nidra was reported to reduce the incidence of insomnia among participants by approximately 88%.

The researchers also suggested that yoga may have an indirect effect on the welfare of people suffering from type 2 diabetes by providing them with opportunities for social support. Along with fostering a greater sense of general wellbeing, this may encourage better self-care and healthier lifestyle choices.



How Does This Relate to Yoga?

Type 2 diabetes develops as a result of interrelated contributing factors, and requires an equally complex approach for successful management. Although the mechanisms by which yoga may affect diabetes-related biochemical processes are complex and not fully understood, the study found apparent interacting effects.

The authors of this study quoted previous research which indicates that the possible stress-reducing qualities of yoga may have beneficial effects in improving hormonal balance. This may have implications for reduced cardiovascular risk related to type 2 diabetes. There is evidence to suggest the physical exertion associated with some types of yoga may offer equivalent benefits to regular exercise. It is also reported that yoga may selectively affect structures and pathways in the brain that help regulate inflammatory responses and metabolic function.

In December 2015, authors affiliated with the University of Virginia and West Virginia University in the US published a systematic review investigating the effects of yoga on a range of factors related to diabetes management.

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Key Findings About the Benefits of Yoga for Supporting Diabetes Management

- There was evidence that yoga may provide benefits for a range of wellness measures related to the effective management of type 2 diabetes, including controlled levels of blood sugar, lipid profile, blood pressure and body weight.

- Although there were problems with the design of many of the trials reviewed, the researchers reported that yoga-based programs were linked with "statistically and clinically significant" benefits for glucose control in 92% of the trials reviewed in this study.

- Three controlled trials suggested yoga was associated with a decrease in the need for medication to control type 2 diabetes. In one of the reviewed trials of 154 adults, the researchers noted that medication use at three-month follow-up had been reduced by up to 40%.

- Only one of the 33 studies reviewed failed to show evidence of significant benefits. The review authors suggested that this was probably because the participants of this study only attended half the group sessions recommended, and did not complete the home-based yoga practice they were instructed to.

Disclaimer: The above does not constitute medical advice, and as with any exercise or wellness program, please consult your medical professional before commencing yoga to support the management of type 2 diabetes.

Journal of Diabetes Research is a peer-reviewed, open access journal that publishes research articles, review articles, and clinical studies related to type 1 and type 2 diabetes. The journal welcomes submissions focusing on the epidemiology, etiology, pathogenesis, management, and prevention of diabetes, as well as associated complications.

Quoted from journal description

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