

PURSUIT

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A monthly wellness newsletter from Better You

What You Don't Know About Yoga May Surprise You



You might have friends who practice yoga and try to sell you on the benefits. They're not stretching the truth when they say it makes them feel better. Studies show yoga improves strength, flexibility, heart health and how you feel.

Yoga's whole-body workout uses your own weight to build muscle tone. Poses like warrior and downward facing dog increase mobility whether you're pretty flexible or stiff as a board. The poses that extend the spine, such as tree pose, circulate energy throughout the whole body. Poses that open the chest, like cobra pose, help you breathe more deeply.

When you combine yoga with a healthy diet and stress management, good things happen to your heart health. Cholesterol levels drop, and progression of heart disease slows.

People who practice yoga daily have low levels of cortisol, a key stress hormone. Yoga's deep breaths help quiet the mind and allow you to relax during stressful situations.

The physical exertion and relaxing meditation improve your sleep. The next time you're struggling to drift off, try forward fold pose or lie on your back and prop your feet up against the wall.

If you have chronic pain, this

might interest you. Studies show that yogis have more grey matter in their brain regions involving pain. The mind-body connection seems to affect the brain in a way that offsets chronic pain.

Practicing yoga also helps ease the symptoms of generalized anxiety. And some research shows that it can decrease depression.

If you're looking for a way to improve your life quality, think about yoga. Classes are available in most communities. You can also find them live online through Florida Blue Centers (find a link to the yoga class [here](#) by scrolling down to Pick Your Place, Florida Blue Fitness Classes Live on Facebook).

Resources: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/>; [WebMd.com](https://www.webmd.com/)

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These Healthy Habits Fight High Cholesterol

Imagine candle wax running through your veins. That's what cholesterol is like—a waxy substance. Your body needs cholesterol to make hormones, vitamin D and acids to help digestion. In this case, too much of a necessary thing can be deadly.

Cholesterol falls into two categories. The good cholesterol is HDL (think of it as "happy"). The bad version is LDL (often called "lousy"). Too much LDL gets deposited along the walls of the arteries. It's a

condition called atherosclerosis, which can cause a heart attack or stroke. But you can keep cholesterol in control. Check out these tips.

Your body makes all the cholesterol it needs, so there's no need to add more through foods. Limit fatty meats, cheese and dairy-based desserts. Choose lean meats, seafood, low-fat or fat-free milk, cheese and yogurt. And eat plenty of vegetables and fruits. Make sure to eat high-fiber foods like oatmeal and beans. Enjoy unsaturated fats like avocado and olive oil. You can find healthy recipes at <https://millionhearts.hhs.gov/learn-prevent/recipes.html>.

It's important to maintain a healthy weight. Those extra pounds can raise your LDL, and body fat

slows down the body's ability to remove LDL from your blood.

Regular physical activity helps you lose weight while raising HDL. And it stabilizes blood pressure. Aim for 2.5 hours a week. And remember, walking is always a good choice.

Stop smoking. It raises LDL and another blood fat called triglycerides. They're a real culprit in building up plaque in your arteries. Your health care provider can recommend tools to help you quit.

Finally, too much alcohol can raise LDL and triglycerides. If you don't drink, don't start. If you do, limit the amount to no more than two drinks a day for men and one for women.

Resources: [Centers for Disease Control](#)

Citrus Immunity Shot (Serves 6)

Ingredients:

- 1 medium grapefruit, peeled
- Juice from 1 medium orange
- Juice from ½ medium lemon
- 1 (1-inch) piece fresh ginger root, peeled
- 1 (1-inch) piece fresh turmeric root, peeled
- ½ clove garlic
- Pinch freshly ground black pepper

Directions

Blend the grapefruit, juice from the orange and lemon, ginger, turmeric, garlic and pepper until smooth. Adjust the ingredients to taste as needed.

Place a small sieve or strainer over a mason jar or glass cup and pour in the liquid. Serve immediately or store in the refrigerator up to four days.



Recipe courtesy of [SkinnyTaste.com](#). For nutritional information, [click here](#).

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