

# Chiropractic Benefits of Yoga

April 2017

The practice of yoga can range from a peaceful and meditative experience to a vigorous workout. Each variety has a different level of intensity, but any style of yoga is helpful for increasing strength and flexibility. Another recurring theme is focusing on posture and body alignment, which is why yoga can have great benefits for chiropractic health.

## Types of Yoga

- Ashtanga Yoga: This is a more intense form of yoga to challenge your strength and stamina
- Bikram Yoga: Also called hot yoga, it is practiced in a warm room to encourage flexibility
- Iyengar Yoga: Focuses on proper alignment with precise poses and stretching, which is recommended for those with back and neck pain

## How it Helps

During a yoga pose, focusing on a breathing pattern helps hold the pose to gently strengthen muscles. Yoga poses are designed to engage back and abdominal muscles, and strengthening those muscle groups gives more support to the spine.

The stretching yoga involves relieves tension from muscles. If you have pain or an injury, muscles that have been carrying stress need to be relieved. Continued stretching will also improve flexibility and range of motion. Yoga poses also improve posture and spinal alignment. Training your body to function with better posture takes pressure off the spine and reduces back pain.

Chronic pain can often lead to a cycle of mental exhaustion and stress. The meditative origin of yoga encourages a quiet, relaxing environment in order to focus on exercise and breathing. The practice of yoga is also a preventative measure. Increasing your strength and flexibility helps your body defend against potential injury.

## Where to Start

Patients with back issues who haven't tried yoga may feel like it is beyond their capabilities, but you don't need to be limber and flexible to begin. It is recommended to find an instructor who has experience working with patients who suffer from back pain and it's important to learn by following an instructor before practicing on your own. Many yoga poses have modified versions for beginners or anyone with limitations. An instructor can demonstrate the use of blocks and straps, which help give beginners extra support and balance.