**Headline:** Guide to Starting a Lifetime Journey Into Yoga

**Teaser:** From improved flexibility to emotional resilience, making yoga part of our daily routine is one of the best investments in our physical and mental well-being.

By Kate Petty

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**[Article Body:]**

The ancient practice of Yoga is rooted in more than 5,000 years of Indian texts and traditions. It has been gaining popularity worldwide due to its benefits of strengthening the body and mind. According to 2023 statistics from the health and wellness brand [The Good Body](https://www.thegoodbody.com/yoga-statistics/), around 300 million people practiced yoga during that year.

In the United States, 10 percent of the population—more than 34 million people—practiced yoga in 2023. That’s good news, as an increasing [body of research](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC3193654/) shows that consistent and long-term yoga practice pays dividends for decades, supporting a healthful and fulfilling life.

Yoga establishes a foundation for wellness that contributes to an improved quality of life in a powerful, integrative, and enduring way. It delivers on every aspect of developing good health, including flexibility, strength, posture, mental clarity, and emotional balance, while also preventing injury and disease.

Developing a unique, lifelong yoga practice offers many benefits, from supporting long-term self-care through adaptable approaches to helping individuals navigate the diverse landscape of yoga styles and find the path that best suits their personal journey.

**An Evolving and Adaptable Practice**

Yoga is a holistic approach to vitality that deepens with age, becoming an invaluable [lifelong tool](https://www.shvasa.com/yoga-blog/yoga-as-a-lifelong-tool-for-growth-benefits) for well-being. [B.K.S. Iyengar](https://bksiyengar.com/), one of the most influential yoga gurus of the 20th century, wrote extensively about the transformative power of the practice. He has often been quoted as proclaiming, “Yoga is a light, which once lit, will never dim.”

The authoritative wisdom on yoga’s holistic principles is imparted in the ancient Sanskrit text the [*Yoga Sutras*](https://www.amazon.com/Yoga-Sutras-Patanjali-Swami-Satchidananda/dp/1938477073) through the [eight limbs of yoga](https://www.healthline.com/health/fitness/the-8-limbs-of-yoga), an outline for spiritual growth and self-realization that guides practitioners through ethical living, disciplined practice, physical postures, breath control, sensory withdrawal, concentration, meditation, and, ultimately, union with the self. In his 2006 book [*Light on Life*](https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/592733/light-on-life-by-bks-iyengar-with-john-j-evans-and-douglas-abrams/), Iyengar offers insights about the benefits of incorporating *asanas* (physical postures), *pranayama* (breathing techniques), *kriya* (practice and action), and *dhyana* (meditation) into our daily routine to integrate every part of the self—body, mind, and spirit.

Yoga embraces all ages, abilities, and body types. “Whether you’re cultivating body awareness as a child, managing work-life stress as an adult, or maintaining vitality in later years, yoga’s versatility makes it a trusted companion for growth and well-being,” says yoga teacher Arunima Singhdeo in her article, “[Yoga as a Lifelong Tool for Personal Growth and Well-Being](https://www.shvasa.com/yoga-blog/yoga-as-a-lifelong-tool-for-growth-benefits).” “This lifelong journey doesn’t require an athlete’s body or hours of daily practice. Instead, it encourages a commitment to personal development—one that meets you where you are and evolves with you over time.”

**Yoga as a Lifelong Investment in Health**

A lifelong yoga practice supports physical health and well-being during every stage of life. Numerous studies published in medical journals and by researchers have demonstrated the benefits of yoga for improved [respiratory function](https://r.yogaalliance.org/About_Yoga/Scientific_Research_on_Yoga/Disease_and_Disorders/Respiratory_Conditions), [blood circulation](https://juniperpublishers.com/jyp/JYP.MS.ID.555726.php), and [heart health](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/?term=yoga+and+cardiovascular+disease).

A 2022 [study](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9386118/) published in the scientific journal Frontiers in Cardiovascular Medicine reported “strong evidence of effectiveness of yogic interventions on lipid profile, blood pressure, and psychosocial outcomes in patients with diagnosed cardiac diseases.”

Yoga poses that involve inversion—turning the body upside down—encourage blood flow to the upper body and head, leading to several advantages, including improved mental clarity and focus. Poor blood circulation can lead to a host of [health problems](https://vitalheartandvein.com/news/symptoms-of-poor-circulation-in-the-body-vascular-issues), including fatigue, swelling, cramps, varicose veins, and even more serious conditions like heart disease.

Gentle movements, combined with steady breathing techniques, create a balance that keeps the cardiovascular system strong. Over time, this can lead to healthier blood vessels and improved heart rate variability.

An essential component of health as we age is hormone regulation; yoga balances hormones through its influence onthe endocrine system. “Yoga, with its holistic approach combining physical postures, breathing exercises, and meditation, has emerged as a prominent practice not only for physical well-being but also as a potential therapeutic intervention for restoring hormonal balance,” [states](https://www.ijfmr.com/research-paper.php?id=36061) a 2025 study published in the International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research.

Long-term regulation of hormones can improve mood and energy levels, as well as reduce symptoms of hormonal imbalances, such as [thyroid disorders](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10277449/). A consistent yoga practice can also ease hormonal transitions into different life stages, such as [menopause](https://www.yogajournal.com/poses/yoga-by-benefit/menopause/).

Yoga also helps to maintain [healthy digestive function](https://www.livescience.com/yoga-for-digestion). Yoga poses can influence the digestive system by stimulating activity in the digestive organs and soothing the nervous system, which eventually aids digestion.

**Healthy Body, Healthy Mind**

Numerous studies have demonstrated the positive effects of yoga on mental health, addressing depression, stress, and anxiety, as well as s[leep disorders](https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/wellness-and-prevention/yoga-for-sleep), while reducing the risk of injury and [age-related diseases](https://www.yogajournal.com/yoga-101/15-anti-aging-health-benefits-of-yoga/).

“When you do yoga, your brain cells develop new connections, and changes occur in brain structure as well as function, resulting in improved cognitive skills such as learning and memory,” states an article in [Harvard Health Publishing](https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/yoga-for-better-mental-health). [Studies](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4769029/) have shown that yoga increases the production of neurotransmitters like serotonin and gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA), which are associated with feelings of happiness and relaxation. Yoga can reduce the secretion of cortisol, the primary stress hormone, leading to lower stress levels and improved mood.

**Children and Teens**

Embarking on a yoga journey at an early age offers numerous benefits. Numerous studies also support the therapeutic power of yoga for[young children](https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/more-than-just-a-game-yoga-for-school-age-children-201601299055) and [teenagers](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7567196/) as they respond to the challenges associated with socialization and adolescence.

Yoga can be a valuable tool for boosting self-confidence and developing emotional resilience. “Through yoga, kids start to realize that they are strong and then are able to take that strength, confidence, acceptance, and compassion out into the world,” [says](https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/more-than-just-a-game-yoga-for-school-age-children-201601299055) Jessica Mei Gershen, a yoga teacher and founder of Yoga For All Needs, in an article in [Harvard Health Publishing](https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/more-than-just-a-game-yoga-for-school-age-children-201601299055).

Research on yoga and adolescents who are dealing with issues like [body image](https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/urban-survival/201505/7-ways-yoga-helps-children-and-teens), [academic](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC3017967/) and [athletic](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9690310/) performance, anxiety, depression, and insomnia indicates that doing yoga can help overcome these problems. Yoga poses and movements help keep joints more flexible, allowing kids to withstand physical stress better. Increased mobility provides greater freedom of movement, strength, and balance, thereby reducing the risk of injuries such as sprains, strains, fractures, and joint dislocations, which are common in youth sports and fitness regimens.

**Improving Life Quality for Seniors Through Yoga**

For older adults, the benefits of yoga can be transformative. As we age, the discs between our vertebrae compress, causing the spine to become more curved and resulting in slouching and poor posture.

Improved balance and stability prevent falls, which are the leading cause of both fatal and nonfatal injuries for older adults. Yoga is also a low-impact activity, and options such as [chair yoga](https://www.health.harvard.edu/exercise-and-fitness/chair-yoga-benefits-of-a-mind-body-practice-without-the-risk-of-falling) and [aqua yoga](https://fitnessdrum.com/aqua-yoga/) further reduce stress on joints and muscles. A s[tud](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4038088/)y published in BMC Complementary and Alternative Medicine determined that yoga can be effective in managing osteoarthritis in older women.

Seniors can be at an [increased risk for anxiety](https://www.medicareadvantage.com/senior-isolation) due to failing health, financial strains, and loneliness. Through its meditative quality, including breathing techniques, yoga can promote relaxation, reduce stress, and improve mindfulness.

The practice of yoga has also been linked to increased longevity. While genetics and lifestyle factors play significant roles in determining lifespan, emerging research suggests that yoga may have a profound impact on aging at the cellular level.

A 2024 [Harvard Health Publishing article](https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/yoga-for-better-mental-health) states:

“Studies using MRI scans and other brain imaging technology have shown that people who regularly did yoga had a thicker cerebral cortex (the area of the brain responsible for information processing) and hippocampus (the area of the brain involved in learning and memory) compared with nonpractitioners. These areas of the brain typically shrink as you age, but the older yoga practitioners showed less shrinkage than those who did no yoga.”

This shows that yoga may prevent age-related declines in memory and other cognitive skills that can lead to [dementia](https://alzheimersprevention.org/the-yoga-rx-for-dementia-alzheimers-and-memory-loss/) and Alzheimer’s disease.

**Navigating the Yoga Landscape**

Many of the most popular styles of yoga—such as Iyengar, Ashtanga, and Vinyasa—fall under the umbrella of [hatha yoga](https://www.yogaeasy.com/artikel/what-is-hatha-yoga), but each emphasizes a distinct approach. Hatha refers to any type of yoga that focuses on principles of alignment by pairing poses with breathing techniques.

With lifelong practice, you may transition through various class experiences, levels, and communities. [Iyengar yoga](https://www.yogajournal.com/yoga-101/types-of-yoga/iyengar/) typically focuses on slower movements, technique, and alignment to build strength, stamina, and flexibility. [Ashtanga yoga](https://www.yogabasics.com/learn/ashtanga-yoga/) is a more fast-paced practice that involves combinations of movements, such as sun salutations, which energize the body. [Vinyasa yoga](https://www.yogabasics.com/learn/articles/vinyasa-moving-with-the-breath/), also known as flow yoga, is a choreographed sequence of poses that can be practiced at any pace. Hatha yoga has spawned various offshoots into both slow- and fast-paced yoga styles, including [restorative yoga](https://www.verywellfit.com/what-is-restorative-yoga-3566876) (which incorporates props and relaxation), [Yin yoga](https://www.yogajournal.com/yoga-101/types-of-yoga/yin/) (which involves holding poses for a longer time), and other Westernized practices such as [hot yoga](https://www.yogabasics.com/connect/yoga-blog/types-of-hot-yoga/) (practiced in a heated room, typically around 95 to 105 degrees Fahrenheit) and [power yoga](https://www.healthline.com/health/what-is-power-yoga) (a hybrid form of yoga and exercise that focuses on building strength and endurance).

You may encounter many teachers and styles, and the student–teacher connection is an integral part of the yoga practice. Finding the best fit may require some experimentation as you consider your preferences and goals. While an adolescent may be drawn to a fast-paced class to develop strength and flexibility, older adults may prefer options that emphasize technique and alignment.

**Building and Maintaining a Lifelong Practice**

There are strategies for maintaining commitment to yoga that, when developed over time, can help you stay connected to your practice. First and foremost, listen to your body. Fitness is not just about pushing yourself; it’s about understanding and respecting your body’s needs. Yoga is a practice of acceptance that aims to refrain from judgment as your body changes and be conscious of limitations as they arise. Here are some points to keep in mind as you embrace the practice:

**Set Your Intention:** “Having a reason for your practice is where it all begins. It is the seed,” says [Maria Andrews](https://yogajala.com/a-yoga-habit-for-life-how-to-commit-to-yoga-for-good-10-tips/), a yoga and meditation teacher and managing editor of yogajala, an online community run by yoga teachers and students. In her article, “A Yoga Habit for Life: How to Commit to Yoga for Good—10 Tips,” Andrews recommends asking yourself what you want from your commitment to yoga:

“Are you looking to nurture your spirituality, get strong and flexible, or develop a healthier routine? Whatever it is, your intention is something that you can use as an anchor. Write it down. Look back at it when you feel like throwing in the towel and remind yourself of your *why*.”

**Put Yoga on Your Calendar:** On a practical level, it’s important to consider the time of day when yoga benefits you most, as well as the logistics of getting to the studio or setting up your mat at home. “When you physically schedule yoga into your day, you’re training your subconscious mind to prioritize it,” points out [Jaffer Hussein](https://www.jafferyoga.com/blog-posts/the-secrets-to-staying-consistent-with-your-yoga-practice), a Toronto-based yoga teacher and health advocate, on his website Jaffer Yoga. “This isn’t just about convenience—it’s about creating a non-negotiable habit.”

**Set Realistic Goals:** Begin with achievable objectives that ensure your journey is both sustainable and fulfilling. “It’s hard to think in lifetimes, easier to think in months, weeks, or days,” [writes](https://yogajala.com/a-yoga-habit-for-life-how-to-commit-to-yoga-for-good-10-tips/) yogajala’s Andrews. “When building a yoga habit for life, it can be more useful and more productive to break your yogic commitment up into shorter-term goals.” Andrews suggests starting by setting small, achievable goals that align with your current abilities and lifestyle. As you gain strength and confidence, you can gradually increase the duration and intensity of your practice.

**Create a Sacred Space:** Designate a space where you can practice yoga. A dedicated area fosters a sense of ritual and makes it easier to maintain consistency. If you are adopting a home practice, numerous online options offer highly specialized instruction, which may be more compatible with your lifestyle. Practicing remotely may also appeal to you as a supplement or alternative to a studio practice. In her [article](https://yogajala.com/sacred-space/), “Sacred Space Alchemy: Crafting the Perfect Sanctuary for Your Practice,” yoga teacher Laia Bové explains:

“When you create a dedicated space for your rituals, routines, and spiritual practices, you can find a deeper sense of presence and stillness. It becomes a sanctuary for self-discovery, where the mind can quiet down, the body can relax, and the soul can expand.”

**Diversify Your Routine:** Keep your fitness routine dynamic by incorporating a variety of yoga styles and wellness practices. This prevents monotony, keeping you engaged and eager to explore new aspects of your overall mind–body health. Try a retreat or workshop that will invigorate and expand your knowledge, experience, and commitment to yoga. An immersive environment allows you to focus solely on your practice without the usual distractions of everyday life.

**Connect With a Community:** Join a yoga studio or online wellness community to share experiences and receive support. Surrounding yourself with like-minded individuals can inspire and motivate you to stay consistent in your holistic fitness journey, ultimately leading to a [long, healthy life](https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2023/03/strong-evidence-that-yoga-protects-against-frailty-in-older-adults/).