

Yoga for Seniors

An ageless practice that is key to feeling younger

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As the U.S. senior populations grows, more and more doctors are encouraging their older patients to stay active and eat well to manage their health. One form of exercise that is growing in popularity among seniors is yoga.

According to the American Senior Fitness Association, seniors age 65 and older represent the fastest-growing sector of the not only the American population, but the world, thanks to medical technology. By the year 2050, the senior population is expected to double—with nearly one quarter 85 and older.

Yoga classes developed especially for seniors - such as chair yoga and gentle yoga - allows older adults to remain active and engaged, as they provide a group setting for a relaxing practice.

Generally, classes for seniors encourage, gentle and slower movements than seen in most all-levels classes in studios or gyms. Thanks to props such as chairs, blankets, blocks, straps, and even the wall, yoga is accessible.

Yoga provides an easy way to build and maintain strength, which helps senior individuals maintain their independence.

A regular yoga practice at any age in life will increase energy, vitality. As people age, loss of muscle mass and strength is common due to hormonal changes and inactivity.

However, while yoga is beneficial to most seniors, issues including arthritis, incontinence, hip or knee replacement, heart disease, osteoporosis, and even cancer, will require modifications to keep the practice safe and accessible.

While the population of 65 and over is increasing, the physical conditions of each seniors is very diverse. A typical yoga class of seniors is likely to represent a mix of ailments, as well as abilities – from healthy and active to more sedentary.

Yoga is most beneficial when studied with an experienced teacher that understands the needs of any student with physical restrictions.

It is highly recommended, that senior students consult a their health care provider before beginning any new exercise program. It is also important that the student inform the teacher of any ailments or injuries prior to class.

Engaging in any new physical activity, will not only build strength, improve posture and health, but it's also another opportunity to be involved in a new community of people while having fun.

There are many benefits for seniors who practice yoga:

- Building strength
- Creating flexibility in the joints
- Developing better balance to avoid falls
- Improving digestion
- Helping to calm the mind
- Increase lung capacity through breath exercises
- Lowering blood pressure
- Improving sleep
- Decreasing anxiety