How Yoga Can Help Ease Asthma Symptoms

by PATRICIA BRATIANU

The Benefits of Yoga for Asthma

Yoga means union, and it offers benefits that help to unite the mind, body, and spirit. There are many different forms of yoga, and while most people think of yoga as a form of physical exercise, that is only one aspect of the yogic lifestyle.

Because of its many facets, yoga offers profound benefits to the health and well being of all people, including those who have asthma. Yoga is effective for people of all ages; even children who have asthma may enjoy implementing easily taught yoga techniques in order to relieve stress and improve breathing.

Is Yoga Good for Asthma?

Because there are so many different forms of yoga, the benefits depend on the kind of yoga practices you implement. Below are just a few things that yoga can do for asthma.

Overall Health and Body Awareness

Yoga postures can help increase your stamina, regardless of your level of health, and enhance your ability to breathe deeply. These exercises relieve stress and improve the function of all of your body systems including your immune system, so you will be able to fight off respiratory infections more readily.

Yoga also increases body awareness. You will become more tuned into your body's subtle signs. By recognizing slight changes quickly, you will be able to recognize signs of flare-ups of symptoms quickly and then take action.

Better Breathing and Breathing Techniques

Unlike most other forms of exercise, yoga teaches breathing techniques, which can strengthen your lungs and the muscles that support respiration.

Breathing techniques can also help relieve stress, which is important because stress causes increased resistance within your airways. If you are having difficulty breathing due to your asthma, you naturally experience stress, and as stress increases your breathing becomes more difficult. Yoga breathing exercises can be used to prevent and break this often terrifying cycle.

Calm Your Mind

Meditation is an integral component of yoga practice. Thousands of years of experience and a plethora of research studies worldwide demonstrate that meditation offers far-reaching health benefits. It calms the mind and body.

Stress is a significant contributor to asthma flare-ups. By incorporating meditative practices into your lifestyle, you will be able to live life with less stress. You will begin to think clearly and focus on the positive aspects of your life.

Practicing meditation will help you to put your illness into perspective and provide you with a “break” from the everyday stressors of living with a chronic illness.

Diet and Yoga

Living the yogic lifestyle has a dietary component. The focus is on pure, simple, easily digestible meals. Many asthma symptoms are related to food sensitivities and allergies; by incorporating a simple diet into your life, you will be empowered to identify and avoid foods that make your symptoms worse.

Your healthy diet in conjunction with your increased mind-body awareness will help you raise your level of comfort and health. You will learn about foods that reduce the formation of mucus and support respiratory and immune system health.

The Research Behind Yoga for Asthma

Multiple modern scientific studies document the benefits of yoga practice for asthma sufferers. A 2014 literature review examined 14 of these research studies, involves an average of 50 participants each.

The researchers compared the effects of yoga with standard treatments for asthma, as reported in the 14 studies.

Most health care providers do not consider yoga an alternative for conventional asthma treatment, as it is a complex condition that requires the use of multiple modalities — and the researchers involved in this review agree.

They concluded that yoga should not be utilized as a sole treatment for asthma, but that it may be a useful complementary therapy. They determined it is generally safe for asthmatics, and that yoga may be a viable alternative to the breathing exercises typically recommended for asthma patients.

Yoga for Asthma: The Bottom Line

Yoga practices offer many benefits for asthma sufferers. Regardless of your age and level of health, there are yoga practices that can fit your lifestyle.

Consult with a qualified health care provider before beginning yoga or any other exercise programs. While you can incorporate many yoga techniques independently, I recommend that you consult with a yoga practitioner or Ayurvedic medical expert to create a comprehensive, individualized, treatment plan.