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Research

Hot Yoga Cools Anxiety, Relieves Depression

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Hot Yoga Cools Anxiety, Relieves Depression

Fran Lowry | April 13, 2015

MIAMI — Yoga is effective for reducing anxiety, depression, and stress in women at risk for mental health problems, new research suggests.

"Yoga has become increasingly popular for addressing anxiety and depressive symptoms," lead researcher Lindsey B. Hopkins DeBoer, PhD, from the San Francisco VA Medical Center, in California, told *Medscape Medical News*.

"I know from my own experience that practicing yoga helped me to cope with the stresses of graduate school. I started doing Bikram yoga in my second or third year, and I noticed dramatic improvement in my ability to handle those stresses. It also improved physical symptoms, such as my lower back pain, which went away," said Dr. Hopkins DeBoer.

The findings were presented here at the Anxiety and Depression Association of America (ADAA) Conference 2015.

Reduces Cortisol

"Research has linked yoga to reduced levels of cortisol, the stress hormone, but there have been very few trials of yoga, and the few that have been done have had important methodological limitations," she said.

In the current study, the investigators examined the effects of Bikram yoga, which is a heated form of Hatha yoga, on depression and anxiety symptoms in a community sample of at-risk women.

The women were recruited with the help of flyers posted in places such as Starbucks and neighborhood shops, she explained.

The study included 52 women, aged 25 to 45 years, who had mildly elevated anxiety (mean Beck Anxiety Inventory score, 12.8), and moderate depression (mean Beck Depression Inventory score, 18.3) and high stress mean (Perceived Stress Questionnaire score, 0.60).

None of the women had taken yoga or had engaged in other mind-body exercises within the past year, nor had they a history of anorexia, bipolar disorder, or psychotic disorders.

The women were randomly assigned to receive two Bikram yoga classes per week or to a wait-list control group. Each class lasted 90 minutes.

Women who received the yoga intervention showed greater decreases in anxiety ($P = .001$), stress ($P = .003$), and negative affect ($P = .02$).

Yoga's effects on stress and depression were somewhat greater for African American women than for non-African American women, Dr. Hopkins DeBoer said.

However, the number of African American women in the study was small (11 [21%]), she noted.

"Because of the small number, I don't think we can make any definite conclusions about yoga being more beneficial for African American women as opposed to white women," said Dr. Hopkins DeBoer.

"But I think we can say that yoga could be an especially important intervention for them, given that African American women have higher rates of depression and psychosocial stressors and lower rates of mental health care use," she added.



Dr Lindsey
Hopkins DeBoer

Weight Loss: It may not make me proud, but I'll admit it; I first came to yoga out of a desire to attain that lean, toned, fit "yoga body" that women more...

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This testimonial is the story of my personal recovery from debilitating pain from herniated discs through the practice of Bikram Yoga. This yoga gave me back my life.

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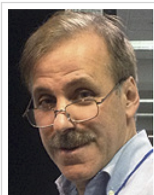
Bikram yoga is a relatively strenuous form of yoga, and some of the women had to be urged to stay with the exercise, Dr Hopkins DeBoer noted.

"Every class was considered to be a beginner's class, and there was a wide range of ages, physical activity level, and weight, but it is relatively strenuous, so keeping people in the study was hard, especially women who had high stress and who were more reactive to being out of their comfort level. But they ended up loving the experience, and there were really good effects. They lost weight, their mood improved, and their anxiety lessened," she said.

"Clinicians treating women who are stressed, anxious, and depressed should consider investigating some form of yoga therapy," said Dr Hopkins DeBoer. "I think yoga pairs nicely alongside psychotherapy for depressed mood and anxiety and stress in women."

Important Treatment Option

Commenting on the study for *Medscape Medical News*, Mark H. Pollack, MD, Grainger professor and chairman, Department of Psychiatry, Rush University Medical Center, Chicago, Illinois, and president of the ADAA, said: "This is an important study that suggests that yoga may be effective for individuals with high levels of stress, anxiety, and depression."



Dr Mark Pollack

"Yoga offers another potentially important treatment option for individuals who are suffering with these often debilitating conditions," Dr Pollack, who was not part of the study, added.

Dr Hopkins DeBoer and Dr Pollack report no relevant financial relationships.

Anxiety and Depression Association of America (ADAA) Conference 2015. Abstract 0.91. Presented April 10, 2015.

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Cite this article: Hot Yoga Cools Anxiety, Relieves Depression. *Medscape*. Apr 13, 2015.

Research Papers published on Bikram Yoga

(1) Journal Name:

Cognitive Behavior Therapy

Date of publication : Online on 8 May, 2015

Title of Article :

Effects of a Hatha Yoga Intervention on Facets of Distress Tolerance:

Authors:

Johnna Medina, Jasper Smits, Scarlett O. Baird, Mark Powers - Department of Psychology, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX, USA

Lindsey Hopkins - San Francisco VA Medical Center, San Francisco, CA, USA

(2) Journal Name:

Scientific Research

Date of publication : Online on 9 May, 2014 in **Scientific Research**

Title of Article :

Optimization of Physical Activity as a Countermeasure of Bone Loss:

A 5-Year Study of Bikram Yoga Practice in Females

Authors:

Sophia N. Sangiorgio - Orthopaedic Biomechanics and Mechano-Biology Laboratory, Orthopaedic Institute for Children, Los Angeles, USA & Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, University of California, Los Angeles, USA.

Arnob K. Mukherjee - Bikram's Yoga College of India, Los Angeles, USA

Nicole W. Lau - University of Southern California, Los Angeles, USA

Apurba Mukherjee - Bikram's Yoga College of India, Los Angeles, USA

Prithwis Mukhopadhyay - Bikram's Yoga College of India, Los Angeles, USA

Edward Ebrahizadeh - Orthopaedic Biomechanics and Mechano-Biology Laboratory, Orthopaedic Institute for Children, Los Angeles, USA & Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, University of California, Los Angeles, USA.

(3) Journal Name:

eHow (on line journal)

Date of publication : 11 August, 2013

Title of Article :

The Advantages of Bikram Yoga over Traditional Methods of Health Therapy

Authors : Stacy D. Hunter, Ph.D.

(4) Journal Name:

Journal of Bodywork and Movement Therapies

Publisher : Elsevier

Date of publication : 21 February, 2013.

Title of Article :

Improvements in glucose tolerance with Bikram Yoga in older obese adults- A pilot study

Authors : Stacy D. Hunter,Ph.D, Mandeep Dhindsa, M.B.B.S, Emily Cunningham,M.Ed, Takashi Tarumi,Ph.D, Mohammed Alkatan,Ph.D - Cardiovascular Ageing Research Laboratory, Department of Kinesiology and Health Education, The University of Texas at Austin.

(5) Journal Name:

The Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine Volume 18, Number 0, 2013,pp.1-5.

Title of Article :

The Effect of Bikram Yoga on Arterial Stiffness in Young and Older Adults

Authors : Stacy D. Hunter,PhD., Cardiovascular Aging Research Laboratory, Department of Kinesiology and Health Education, The University of Texas at Austin, Mandeep

S.Dhindsa,MBBS, Emily Cunningham, MEd, Takashi Tarumi,PhD, Mohammed Alkatan,MS, Nantinee Nualnim,PhD and Hirofumi Tanaka, PhD.

(6) Journal Name:

International Scholarly Research Network ISRN Neurology Volume 2012, Article ID 153745, 7 pages, doi: 10.5402/2012/153745

Title of Article :

Decreased Nocturnal Awakenings in Young Adults Performing Bikram Yoga: A Low-Constraint Home Sleep Monitoring Study

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(7) Journal Name:

Journal of Exercise Science and Fitness, Vol 9, No 2 (2011)

Title of Article :

An Examination of the Effectiveness of a 8-week Bikram Yoga Program on Mindfulness, Perceived Stress and Physical Fitness.

Authors : Zoe L. Hewett - Jaeger Circuit, Bruce, ACT 2617, AUSTRALIA,

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Shelly Lucas - Department of Kinesiology, Boise State University, Boise, Idaho, USA.

(8) Journal Name:

Chinese Medicine (Scientific Research Journal) Volume 1 - Number 1, (June 2010)

Title of Article :

Bikram Yoga as a Countermeasure of Bone Loss in Women

Authors : Apurba Mukherjee, PhD, Pritwis Mukherjee and Dr. Robert R. Rude, M.D.

(9) Journal Name:

The Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research Volume 22, Number 5, (September 2008)

Title of Article:

Yoga as Steadiness Training : Effects on Motor Variability in Young Adults

Authors : Cady E.F. Hart and Brian L. Tracy, Ph.D., Department of Health and Exercise Science, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado.

Note: You may request details regarding these research articles at

research@bikramyoga.com