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## Booster Shots

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### Yoga helps relieve chronic back pain

September 3, 2009 | 6:00 am

Chronic back pain is difficult to treat and causes loads of misery. But something as simple as twice-weekly yoga appears to relieve pain and improve mood in people with the condition.

The study, published in this month's issue of the journal *Spine*, was a three-year, \$400,000 research project funded by National Institutes of Health. Researchers assigned 90 people with chronic low back pain to a yoga group or a control group that received standard medical care.



Those in the yoga group participated in 24 weeks of biweekly yoga classes designed for people with chronic lower-back pain. Six months after the study ended, those in the yoga group reported significantly more improvements in pain and functionality compared with subjects in the other group. In addition, depression was much lower in the yoga subjects. The use of pain medication was reduced, but that reduction was similar in both groups.

"The yoga group had less pain, less functional disability and less depression compared with the control group," Kimberly Williams, the lead investigator, from West Virginia University, said in a news release. "Proponents of yoga have long described its benefits in reducing back pain. But not everyone was convinced. This is a much bigger, much more rigorous evaluation than had been done before."

The classes were taught by an instructor certified in Iyengar yoga, a type that emphasizes posture.

-- Shari Roan

Photo credit: Tony Gutierrez / Associated Press

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## Comments

Yoga definitely helps strengthen the little back pain here and there. Mine was hurting so much, I eventually gave in and bought a G2 Fit yoga mat with the self guiding pictures on them. Here's my coupon code if anyone is interested. You can use it on their website G2fit.com. "TLG2DEAL"

**Posted by: derek | September 03, 2009 at 03:53 PM**

Iyengar yoga is the best type of yoga for chronic lower back pain. I have had spondylitis for 15 years now and 1 year of Iyengar yoga has completely cured it. My teacher uses therapeutic techniques like traction with ropes and belts and then we do postures with the help of the same. The main postures are back bending postures like bhujang asan (snake pose) and camel pose, and lying supine with lower back raised on bolsters to give your back an extended arch. Then we do counters to the same - legs to chest poses. Forward bending poses and sooryanamaskar are a big no-no until the pain is completely gone.

**Posted by: Permaj | September 03, 2009 at 11:21 PM**

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