

YOGA

Hatha Yoga

Hatha (sun/moon) yoga, the physical aspect of yoga, is what most of westerners regard as yoga.

The word “hatha” combines two Sanskrit words: ha, which means “the breath of the sun” (prana), and tha, “the breath of the moon” (apana).

The following list describes some of the more popular types of yoga available today. Some are more spiritual, some more strenuous, and some offer degrees of combinations of the two.

You should try different types of yoga to find the one best for you.

Astanga (or Ashtanga)Vinyasa Introduced to the West in the early 1980’s when Westerners traveling to India discovered it and brought it back. A number of derivatives now exist (Vinyasa flow, Dynamic or Power yoga) Astanga’s appeal lies in its challenging and dynamic aspects. It combines movement with breath and focus, requiring students to gain stamina and strength. It is well suited as a cardio workout.

Bikram Also known as “Hot Yoga,” Bikram yoga is one of the most popular types of yoga today. It is practiced in a room heated to temperatures as high as 115 °F. It is believed that heat enables the body to move and stretch with far less chance of injury. A typical 1.5-hour Bikram class consists of a fixed number of poses, all done in an order that never varies. This type of yoga is very popular because it is easily accessible—as long as you can endure the heat. Be sure to drink plenty of water before, during and after your session.

Integral Yoga (Purna-Yoga)Integral yoga represents a fusion of body, mind and spirit. It’s gentle, restorative and highly invigorating all at once. The poses can be an excellent source for rigorous physical workout and fitness. A liberal infusion of spiritual content, meditation and yoga nidra (deep relaxation) into the class session. Integral yoga is suited for beginners or experts of any age.

Iyengar The style is very precise, focusing on achieving “perfect” alignment of the body. Of course there is always room for improvement, but the overall effect is to ensure energy flows throughout the body in a balanced and unobstructed manner. Emphases the development of strength, stamina, flexibility and balance, as well as concentration (Dharana) and meditation (Dhyana). This practice builds body awareness and control, requiring a great deal of concentration on detail.

Kundalini (serpent power) Features frequent chanting, breathing techniques and vigorous aerobic exercises. Kundalini is a term that refers to the spiritual energy force that lies dormant in most people. This type of yoga helps prepare the body and mind for the activation of this energy. As a result there is less emphasis on form or on holding positions. Given the intense focus of the practice (and the advanced breathing techniques), Kundalini practitioners may achieve results faster than other types of yoga.

Classes follow a set pattern of postures with relaxation in between. These postures become more advanced as the practitioner gains experience.

Viniyoga Each individual is given a personalized practice schedule that addresses their individual needs and requirements with the aim of restoring them to balance.