

Drop Those Pounds With Yoga—Studies Show Yoga Stimulates Weight Loss By Jennifer Van Pelt, MA Today's Dietitian Vol. 14 No. 3 P. 18.

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**March 2012 Issue**

**Drop Those Pounds With Yoga — Studies Show Yoga Stimulates Weight Loss**

**By Jennifer Van Pelt, MA**

*Today's Dietitian*

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***Author's Note:** This article is the last in a three-part series on the health benefits of yoga. In this final installment, I'll discuss how yoga can help promote weight loss and general health.*

Most people practice yoga to improve flexibility and balance, relieve stress, and reduce aches and pains. But yoga also can help your clients lose weight.

While yoga generally doesn't burn as many calories as cardiovascular exercise, it can have a positive influence on the mental aspects associated with success and weight maintenance.

Yoga can increase body awareness; counter negative, self-judging thinking; and foster a sense of self-control, according to several studies. The 2011 *Yoga Journal* weight loss special issue. The exact mechanism of weight loss isn't known, but it's likely a combination of physical exertion and mental benefits derived from relaxation breathing and mindful meditation.



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For yoga participants who also practice yoga philosophy, such as the Yoga, benefits may result from a focus on honesty, contentment, and of yoga class. Physical poses associated with weight loss involve twi digestion, standing poses that strengthen larger muscle groups, and stimulate abdominal organs and the thyroid gland.

### What the Studies Say

A large public health study that included 15,550 adults aged 53 to 57 activity, including yoga and weight change over several years. Practic more years was associated with a 3-lb lower weight gain among nori participants (BMI of less than 25) and an 18.5-lb lower weight gain an subjects. Regular yoga practice was associated with less weight gain especially in those who were overweight.<sup>1</sup>

Recently, yoga has been incorporated into programs for eating diso management for obesity. In a small randomized study of yoga for ob practicing yoga for 16 weeks had significantly decreased body weigh percentage, BMI, waist circumference, and visceral fat area comparec didn't exercise.<sup>2</sup>

Other researchers examined 20 personal journals of obese women v disorder undergoing a 12-week yoga treatment program. Qualitative that the women's perspectives about eating changed for the better. T suggested the yoga program developed physical self-empowermen healthy reconnection with food habits, and cultivated awareness of s moment. Program participants reduced the amount of food they ate, eating speed, and improved their food choices during the program. reported feeling "more connected and positive about their physical v translated to better eating habits.<sup>3</sup>

### Fat-Burning Yoga Styles

Certain types of yoga can serve as low-impact cardiorespiratory exe clients who may have stress injuries from high-impact activities such those looking to add variety to their exercise program. Athletic and a enjoy Ashtanga or Bikram yoga that involve a progressive series of p generate internal heat and a purifying sweat, facilitated by a heated r yoga, a faster-paced flowing series of yoga poses. Clients also can p salutations, a series of 12 poses that can elevate the heart and breat higher end of the participant's target heart rate range. A study of the associated with sun salutations found that performing the series of p produced a cardiorespiratory training effect and an energy expendit enough to burn off the calories from eating a candy bar.

Overweight and obese clients may feel self-conscious or discourage participants. For example, heavier clients will require modifications ir while yoga instructors are trained to provide modifications for begin people, modifications for heavier individuals are different because o of movement limitations due to size rather than inflexibility.

Nonetheless, the yoga community is evolving and classes such as "Fi "Yoga for Real People" are now emerging.<sup>5</sup> These types of classes ar instructors who are heavier themselves. If clients can't locate such cla instructional books and DVDs are available.

— Jennifer Van Pelt, MA, is a certified group fitness instructor and healthc analyst/consultant in the Reading, Pennsylvania, area. She's trained in Sil YogaStretch and YogaFit for Seniors.

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- ***Yoga: Just My Size*** with Megan Garcia
- ***HeavyWeight Yoga: Yoga for the Body You Have Today***
- ***HeavyWeight Yoga 2: Change the Image of Yoga***
- ***Yoga for the Rest of Us*** with Peggy Cappy

#### **Books**

- ***Plus-Sized Yoga: Beginners Yoga for People of All Sizes***
- ***MegaYoga***
- ***Yoga for Fat Guys: From Lumpy to Limber in Just Six Weeks***
- ***Big Yoga: A Simple Guide for Bigger Bodies***

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