

Ways to Wellness™

Integrative Medicine for Kids

YOGA



What's it about? If you've ever spent time with a baby, you've already learned something about yoga. Babies love to stretch their legs, arch their backs, "swim" on their tummies and roll over. Their movements not only feel good, but help them learn how to balance and stay healthy.

Yogis—people who practice yoga—also "play" with their bodies. Like babies, the first yogis (who came from India thousands of years ago) were fascinated by everything around them: mountains, trees, birds and animals. They discovered that posing like a lion could make them feel strong, and that imitating a tree helped them feel rooted to the earth. Their poses are still used in yoga to help people "discover" their bodies and to help them feel calm, healthy and energetic.

How does it work? Most sports routines have goals, like making a basket or hitting a ball. Yoga, though, is all about staying focused on your body, moment by moment. By breathing deeply and moving your body into poses, you not only stretch and strengthen your muscles, you focus your mind and balance your energy. If you're tired, for instance, yoga can give you a lift. If you're stressed out, yoga can help you relax.

Yoga is especially good if you feel blah or depressed. It's like wringing yourself out and filling the space with positive energy. By moving your body, you help your brain make more serotonin, a chemical that makes you feel calmer and more upbeat. And by practicing different poses, you help your body get in touch with many other kinds of good feelings. You might find, for instance, that you can be as strong as a mountain, as supple as a snake, as noble as a warrior, or as graceful as a tree swaying in the breeze.



Practice, not perfect. Babies may seem good at yoga, but the rest of us—who might spend more time on video games than we do rolling on our backs—probably need some help getting flexible. In a yoga class, a good yoga teacher can help you find positions that help you become strong and graceful without pain.

If you can't find a class, try books and videos. And try different styles of yoga—some poses are slow and gentle; some can really make you sweat. Whatever you do, remember that yoga is a practice. There's no score, no goal. You just do what's best for your body to be the best yogi you can be.



For more information call 612-813-7888
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