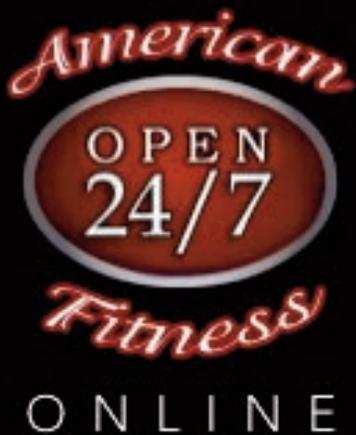


Member Event

The Heart *of* Yoga

“Love the drum that needs no drummer.”

– Unknown



Maura Utley
eRYT 500 Y.A.C.E.P.
American Fitness

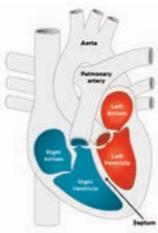


The Anatomy of the Heart

How The Heart Works

The heart pumps blood to every part of your body. It is a muscular organ which supplies blood carrying oxygen and nutrients to every cell, nerve, muscle and vital organ in your body. It sits in your chest between your lungs, slightly to the left of center, and is protected by your rib cage.

Your heart is about the size of your clenched fist and weighs about 300 grams. Your heart is made up of 4 chambers, 2 on the right and 2 on the left. These are like the rooms of your house. The top two chambers are called the left and right atrium and the bottom two are called the left and right ventricles.



They are divided by a thin wall called the septum. There are four heart valves, which act like doors between the chambers of the heart. They open and close as your heart pumps. The valves only open one way. This stops blood from flowing in the wrong

direction between the chambers of your heart. Blood travels between the heart and the lungs and the rest of the body, via a network of pipes called the blood vessels.

There are 3 main types of blood vessels.

- **Arteries** carry oxygenated blood from your heart
- **Veins** carry the de-oxygenated blood back to your heart and lungs.
- **Capillaries** are the small vessels where oxygenated and de-oxygenated blood is exchanged.

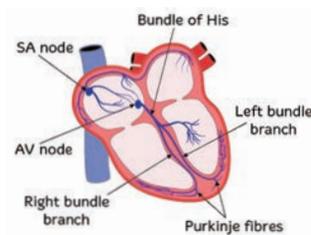
See a video on how the heart works

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GE0HIVTTgFc&feature=youtu.be>

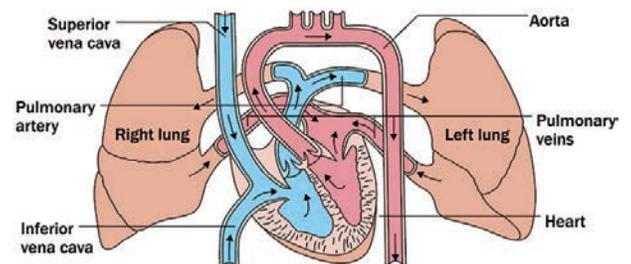
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Your conduction system sends the electrical signals which trigger the heart to pump blood around the body and to-and-from the lungs. Blood which has used all its oxygen is returned to the right side of the heart, via large veins called the inferior and superior vena cava. From there it is pumped to the lungs, via the pulmonary artery.

Once the blood has received oxygen from the lungs, it travels through the pulmonary veins into the left side of the heart. From here, it is pumped back out around the body, via the aorta.



Your heart has its own electrical wiring system (conduction system), which keeps it beating. This conduction system of nodes is your body's own internal pacemaker, producing electrical signals to make your heart beat. Some nodes pass on the electrical signals from the upper chambers of the heart (atrium) to the lower ones (ventricles). These bundles act like electrical wiring communicating signals around the heart. From there, it passes through the bundle of HIS and into the right and left bundle branches. Finally, the signal travels down the Purkinje fibers, causing the ventricles to contract. This pushes blood out of your heart to your lungs and the rest of your body.



SOURCE: The Heart Foundation 2021

Yoga As Exercise

Aerobic Exercise (Cardio)

Aerobic exercise improves circulation, which results in lowered blood pressure and heart rate. Additionally, it increases your overall aerobic fitness, as measured by a treadmill test, for example, and it helps your cardiac output (how well your heart pumps). Aerobic exercise also reduces the risk of type 2 diabetes and, if you already live with diabetes, helps control blood glucose levels. How much cardio do we need: ideally, a minimum of 30 minutes a day, five days a week. Examples: Brisk walking, running, swimming, cycling, playing tennis and jumping rope. Power Flow Yoga, Buti Yoga, and Ashtanga are considered the most “cardio” styles of yoga.

Resistance Training (Weightlifting)

What it does: Resistance training has a more specific effect on body composition. Working with weights can help reduce body fat and create leaner muscle mass; an excess of body fat increases your risk for heart disease. Research shows that a combination of aerobic exercise and resistance may help raise HDL (good) cholesterol and lower LDL (bad) cholesterol. How much exercise do you need: At least two nonconsecutive days per week of resistance training is a good rule of thumb, according to the American College of Sports Medicine. Examples: Working out with free weights (such as hand weights, dumbbells or barbells), on weight machines, with resistance bands or through body-resistance exercises, such as push-ups, squats and chin-ups. Several styles of yoga incorporate resistance training using your body’s weight (e.g. planks, arm balances, isometrics).

Mindful Movement and Mindfulness Practices

Yoga improves heart health by increasing circulation and blood flow. Practicing yoga can help lower blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood glucose levels, as well as the heart rate — which can all add up to a lower risk of hypertension, stroke, and heart disease. Another benefit is musculoskeletal health, which enables you to stay flexible and free from joint pain, cramping and other muscular issues. Flexibility is a critical part of being able to maintain aerobic exercise and resistance training. Research indicates that a good musculoskeletal foundation enables you to do exercises that help your heart. Yoga helps maintain stability and prevent falls, which can cause injuries that limit other kinds of exercise. How much: Yoga can be performed every day, and stretching should be done before and after exercise. Examples: All modalities of yoga, Tai Chi and Mindfulness practices, such as meditation, help reduce the negative effects of stress anxiety.

Your take-away? All forms of exercise help keep your heart healthy.

Thank you for being a member of American Fitness.

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The Heart-Healthy Benefits of Yoga



Yoga Enhances A Healthy Heart

Many people think of yoga as an activity that promotes flexibility and balance, but this ancient tradition also incorporates breathing exercises, relaxation, and meditation. Together, these practices can lead to measurable improvements in factors connected with cardiovascular health, such as lower blood pressure, better sleep, and less artery-damaging inflammation.

"There are four distinct but interconnected areas in which yoga has specific benefits, not just for heart disease but any disease", says yoga researcher and neuroscientist Dr. Sat Bir Singh Khalsa, assistant professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School. The following are summaries of these four areas.

Better Overall Fitness

All forms of yoga, (active and less-vigorous forms of yoga) boost muscle strength, flexibility, and balance, features, which are often overlooked in other forms of exercise. Yoga encourages deep, slow breathing, which helps lower blood pressure by an average of five points after a few months of regular practice, research suggests.

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Yoga Inspires Resilience

The relaxing, meditative aspect of yoga, can build up your emotional resilience helping you to stay calmer during times of stress. Stress — an unavoidable part of our daily lives — activates the body's fight-or-flight response. This triggers a rise in heart rate, blood pressure, and the release of stress hormones, all of which are hard on your cardiovascular system. Yoga helps activate the opposite effect, known as the rest-and-digest response. Over time, a regular yoga practice cultivates this "relaxation response," enabling you to be less reactive to stress and intense emotions. Studies show a single session of yoga has been shown to lower levels of the stress hormone cortisol.

Improved Mind-Body Awareness

A recent study claims over 80% of yoga enthusiasts attribute their yoga practice a decrease in stress. Two-thirds reported that yoga motivated them to exercise more regularly, and four in ten said they were inspired to eat healthier. These changes may reflect the heightened mind-body awareness that yoga practitioners experience. "Yoga makes you more in touch with your body. You're also more likely to notice the negative effects of eating junk food and sitting on a couch all day," says Dr. Khalsa. Making healthy lifestyle choices is perhaps the most important thing you can do to prevent heart disease, he points out.

Transformation Over Time

After years of doing yoga, studies reveal people find that the practice transforms their lives providing more serenity, a different perspective of lives and a greater sense of purpose. A fitness regime that includes yoga as one of its four key components (along with healthy eating habits, moderate exercise, and the maintenance of loving, supportive relationships) can actually shrink blockages in arteries, even without the use of medication. Yoga and movement can be proactive medicine for some.

Stress And Your Heart Health



Constant Stress — whether from relationship challenges, financial concerns, or a heavy workload — can have real physical effects on the body. It has been linked to a wide range of health issues, including mood, sleep, and appetite problems, and yes, even heart disease.

The medical community is learning more about how chronic stress affects the heart every day. Stress triggers inflammation, a known instigator of heart disease, but why that happens hasn't medically yet been determined. "I think the conventional opinion is that stress is bad for your heart, but the data are much murkier," says Dr. Deepak Bhatt, director of the Integrated Interventional Cardiovascular Program at Brigham and Women's Hospital. Yet, we know stress has the propensity to influence heart disease in more subtle and indirect ways.

"Stress itself, does cause some people to act in ways that increase their risk for heart disease," Dr. Bhatt says. For example, when stressed, people often eat unhealthy food and don't have the energy or time to exercise. Stress can also lead us into other heart-damaging behaviors, such as smoking and alcohol abuse.

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Breaking this chain reaction requires both recognizing what triggers your negative stress, and learning how to cope with stressful situations so that you can protect yourself from developing/breaking some unhealthy habits.

Here are five tips to help mitigate stress

Stay Positive

Laughter has been found to lower levels of stress hormones, reduce inflammation in the arteries, and increase "good" HDL cholesterol.

Meditate

This practice of inward-focused thought and deep breathing has been shown to reduce heart disease risk factors such as high blood pressure. Meditation's close relatives, yoga and prayer, can also relax the mind and body.

Exercise

Every time you are physically active, whether you take a walk or play tennis, your body releases mood-boosting chemicals called endorphins. Exercising not only helps you destress, it also protects against heart disease by lowering your blood pressure, strengthening your heart muscle, and helping you maintain a healthy weight.

Unplug

It's impossible to escape stress when it follows you everywhere. Cut the cord. Avoid emails and TV news. Take time each day — even if it's for just 10 or 15 minutes — to escape from the world. Find ways to de-stress. Simple things, like a warm bath, listening to music, or spending time on a favorite hobby, can give you a much-needed break from the stressors in your life.

Strike A Pose

Live From The Heart

Your heart is a source of intuition and deep knowledge—but you may miss its messages when your (busy) mind rules.

Our heart is a muscular organ responsible for pumping blood throughout the body, so it is crucial to take better care of it. Sedentary lifestyle, eating habits, and stress are a few things that can disturb the normal functioning of our heart and can increase the risk of cardiovascular problems. In such a condition, yoga is one of the best ways to take care of your heart, physically and even emotionally.

Here are some poses that are designed to help you get out of your head and into your heart.

The British Heart Foundation recently recommended people living with heart disease to practice yoga. Yoga helps to reduce stress, anxiety and lower the risk of depression, which is quite beneficial for your heart health. These five asanas (poses) are considered to be beneficial for heart health. Other poses such as Wild Thing, Fish Pose (Matsyasana) and Sugar Cane pose (Chapasana) inspire heart health.

The Heart
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Triangle Pose

Utthita Trikonasana



Seated Forward Fold

Paschimottanasana



Half Spinal Twist

Matsyendrasana



Cow Face Pose

Gomukhasana



Bridge Pose

Setu Bandha:



The Heart Chakra; the 4th Chakra

Emotions Manifest Physically

On a subtle level, our bodies communicate with the energies around us and some energetic imbalances usually relate directly to a certain part of the body and chakra that's weakened or imbalanced.



FOURTH CHAKRA Anahata



Each chakra represents a spiritual life lesson or challenge to help us gain a more in-depth understanding of our personal and spiritual power. This in turn helps us learn how to overcome obstacles, let go of emotional blockages, and walk the path towards spiritual consciousness. The heart chakra is the central powerhouse of the subtle body associated with intuition and

spirituality. The heart is the mediator between body and spirit, and it directly determines one's strength and health. The heart chakra, or Anahata, deals with unconditional love and emotional power. At its core, this chakra is emotional and propels us to enhance our emotional development. The heart embodies a gentle wisdom that

teaches us the ways of love and compassion. It is in this fourth chakra that we begin to recognize that the most powerful energy on earth is love. Ultimately, the Heart Chakra is a window into your most true self. The practice of yoga and meditation helps us cultivate better ways to respond to emotional situations, and provides perspective and understanding. Caring for our heart Chakra allows us self-examination and become better people.

Balancing the Heart Chakra

The Chakra chant: "Yam". The color: green.
The element: air. The energy: love.

Characteristics of an underactive heart chakra

- Shyness
- Fear of getting hurt
- Feelings of loneliness or being unloved
- Suspicious
- Possessive
- Antisocial
- Judgmental
- Fear of relationships

In addition to meditation, to inspire healing:
CRYSTALS: Rose Quartz, Kunzite, Rhodochrosite
ESSENTIAL OILS: Geranium

Characteristics of an overactive heart chakra

- Overly empathetic
- Overly concerned
- Jealous
- Poor boundaries
- Codependency
- Clinging
- Tendency to stay in abusive relationships
- Overly sacrificing

In addition to meditation, to inspire healing:
CRYSTALS: Emerald, Malachite
ESSENTIAL OILS: Melaleuca

Awareness is the first step towards a healthier you.

The Heart
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The Heart and Mind of Yoga

Yoga Chitta Vritti Nirodha

“Yoga ceases the fluctuations of the mind.”

In the Yoga Sutras, Sage Patanjali has written extensively about the turbulences of the mind and how the step-by-step process of yoga can still the mind. It is only in the silencing of these fluctuations that we can actually recognize, know and rest in our true nature. Gradually, with more yoga, more conscious breath, more body awareness and more Savanasas, the thoughts, words and action-steps we hear, say, and take, are much more intuitive and more altruistic in nature.

Why are we calmer, kinder and more peaceful after we practice yoga? Perhaps, before yoga, we feel as though the brain seems to run the show. Why after yoga, does a more heart-centered, love-driven existence begins to emerge?

Physically, the heart develops before the brain.

Research shows that while growing in the womb our human heart always grows/develops at least 1-3 days before the brain and nervous system:

Between each and every one of our spinal vertebrae is a pair of sensory and motor nerves (31 pairs). Sensory nerves send information about both our external environment and our internal environment to the brain. Motor nerves take the reactions – the action-step messages from the brain, back to these external and internal environments.

Essentially the brain is ready and waiting for information; it is in a perpetual and natural state of reception. Studies show that one of the main areas the brain is waiting to receive messages from, is the heart.

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FETAL DEVELOPMENT

Day 18 – Following fertilisation, the heart begins to form

Day 19-21 – The nervous system begins to form (the foundation of the brain, spinal cord and cns)

Day 22 – The heart begins to pump

Day 26 – Forebrain develops

Day 28 – The spinal cord develops

Fetal heart is functionally complete at the 7th week.

18th week, the nervous system is complete.

In every instance, the heart makes an appearance before the brain.

In addition to the spinal nerves there are 12 pairs of cranial nerves (brain nerves). The tenth cranial nerve is the vagus nerve, a pair of nerves that interfaces with the parasympathetic system (rest-and-digest portion of the autonomic nervous system; heart and digestive system). This is the pathway through which the brain receives the messages, not only from the heart and the digestive system, but other organs as well. It is the vagus nerve that transmits the data to the brain about what is going on in our internal environment. The heart sends more messages to the brain

Positive emotions cultivated through the practice of joy, gratitude and loving-kindness actually affect tremendous whole body shift towards harmony and balance.

To slow the progression of heart disease

- Reduce saturated/trans fats, and cholesterol
- Eat more whole foods rich in fiber
- Reduce excess body fat
- Reduce sodium intake
- Eat less sugar and processed foods
- Follow AMA's guidelines for alcohol use
- Do not smoke
- Get Moving!

Getting enough sleep and exercising consistently helps the mind, body, and spirit especially during difficult times.

February 14, 2021

Friends,

Thank you for participating in today's special event, and thank you for continuing to support our group exercise classes during this very challenging year.

Whether you're attending in-person classes, taking classes on zoom, or using our new recorded class option, maintaining a consistent fitness routine is an effective wellness strategy. Regular exercise helps cultivate the emotional resilience and mental fortitude you need to face difficult situations better.

I am incredibly grateful for how you, our members, and our instructors adapted so quickly to this new virtual class environment. I am equally thankful for our management team's support, allowing us to add the technology we needed to provide you with virtual classes, now and in the future.

I wish you a very happy and healthy Valentine's Day,

From my heart to yours,

Maura Utley

American Fitness 24/7 Fitness Coordinator
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For more information visit my website: YogaSimpatico.com

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