

Yoga and the Blue Zones Connection



DOCTOR'S NOTES DR. ERIC HOCHMAN

Have you taken the Blue Zones Pledge? If not what is stopping you? Every month our community is becoming healthier and happier.

The Blue Zones "Power Nine" principles can be an effective roadmap to improved health and increased longevity. One simple way to implement many blue zones principles at the same time is to take up Yoga. Yoga, the centuries old Indian practice, has been touted by conventional medical practitioners and by naturalists alike. It is known by many as the core to good health.

The first of the "Power Nine" principles is to move naturally. People with the longest longevity incorporate more movement and activity into their daily routine. Another "Power Nine" tenet is to minimize stress and find useful stress relieving strategies. And a third "Power Nine" involves engaging in social circles that support healthy behaviors. So if you have heard of the Blue Zones, but have not been sure how to start getting involved, consider attending Yoga classes. In doing so, you can satisfy three of the "Power Nine".

Yoga is a perfect Blue Zone activity because it is an active exercise, often performed with a group of like-minded, health conscious individuals. It focuses on exercise while reducing stress. At the same time, yoga improves balance, strength, and flexibility, which can decrease the risk for fall and injury.

According to Web MD, research shows that up to 90 percent of all doctor visits are linked to stress-related problems. Also, over 40 percent of adults suffer adverse health effects from stress. In turn, stress is known to worsen headaches, high blood pressure, diabetes, and contribute to heart attacks and strokes, among many other health conditions. According to the Harvard Medical Health Letter, "available reviews of a wide range of yoga practices suggest they can reduce the impact of exaggerated stress responses".

Yoga has been shown to ease lower back pain (lumbago) and also alleviate other chronic pain, such as arthritis. Numerous studies suggest that yoga is beneficial for chronic low back pain,



USA TODAY NETWORK

Annemarie Weeks accomplishes the downward facing dog yoga position at Yoga Bird in Fort Myers in 2014. Yoga is a perfect Blue Zones activity because it is an active exercise, reduces stress and improves balance, strength and flexibility.

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» Learn more about Southwest Florida's commitment to become a Blue Zones community: collier.bluezonesproject.com, naplesnews.com/bluezone

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knee and hand osteoarthritis. A meta-analysis (review) of studies to date published by Bussing and colleagues in the Journal of Pain in 2012 found that all studies reviewed reported positive effects in favor of yoga interventions.

In regards to chronic conditions such as diabetes, yoga also has demonstrated benefit. Dr. Malhotra and colleagues found that regular participation in Yoga can lower blood sugar and lead to decreased waist-hip ratio, which is associated with a decreased risk of cardiovascular diseases. A criti-

cal review of the published literature in 2007 found evidence that diabetics who practice yoga can improve glucose tolerance, increase insulin sensitivity, improve cholesterol, and improve blood pressure.

Finally, evidence suggests that people who practice yoga use up to 43 percent fewer medical services, saving hundreds to thousands of dollars in healthcare costs and lowering their own medical bills.

With all this benefit, yoga is a great exercise to incorporate into your daily

routine. Join your friends, neighbors, and colleagues on the road to a better future.

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For more information about Blues Zones visit southwestflorida.bluezones-project.com

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