



# Why Yoga Right Now?

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A study showed that within five weeks, 60 minutes of yoga just two days per week significantly reduced stress, depression and anxiety. Thousands of studies have shown the benefits of yoga not just for mental health, but other medical conditions, such as heart health, diabetes, weight management, nerve pain and GI issues to name a few.

Now, more than ever it's valuable to consider yoga. When you think of people that practice yoga, do you automatically picture a Yogi or certified instructor drinking green tea? Hopefully not because yoga is for everyone and every body.













With the many different styles of yoga, there is something for everyone. You can now find football teams, military veterans, people in drug and alcohol treatment centers, pain management clinic attendees, senior citizens and students learning to do yoga. I began practicing prenatal yoga to help me throughout my pregnancy.

When I tell someone I teach yoga, I typically hear, "Oh I'm not flexible enough for all that" or "I need a real workout, not just stretching because I can't sit still that long." My least favorite one is, "I would love to someday when I lose some weight." All of these comments are completely opposite of how I would like Mississippians to see yoga. It does take a while for new things to make its way down South, but yoga is beginning to grow and more doctors are learning about the real benefits yoga provides.

The word "Yoga" means yoke and it originated in India thousands of years ago. As it has evolved there are many styles that look completely different, but all still have the same basic principles. On the back of this handout is a basic sequence of poses used in every yoga class to connect and bring awareness to the breath. It is called a Sun Salutation A. Give it a try!

## Cues for Your Sun Salutation A

Go at your own pace. Hold each pose for about five seconds focusing on your breath and gradually increase your time as you get better. Start with two rounds and be sure to switch sides when lunging.

<p><b>1</b> PRAYER</p>  <p><b>START</b></p> <p>Begin standing with toes touching and a slight space between the heels. Place hands in prayer over your heart. Relax your shoulders and draw your navel towards your spine.</p>	<p><b>2</b> UPWARD SALUTE</p>  <p><b>INHALE</b></p> <p>Inhale as you sweep your arms out and up high.</p>	<p><b>3</b> FORWARD FOLD</p>  <p><b>EXHALE</b></p> <p>Exhale as you fold forward leading out with your chest and then release the neck. Keep a soft bend in the knees.</p>	<p><b>4</b> LOW LUNGE</p>  <p><b>INHALE</b></p> <p>Plant your hands and step the left foot back into a low lunge. Drop the back knee down. Take three rounds of breath releasing tension in the front body with each exhale.</p>	<p><b>5</b> PLANK</p>  <p><b>HOLD</b></p> <p>Lift the back knee up and step the right foot back to plank. Stack shoulders over wrists. Navel is lifted towards spine with heels towards the back of the room.</p>	<p><b>6</b> CHATURANGA</p>  <p><b>EXHALE</b></p> <p>Exhale, squeeze elbows into your sides and lower halfway making a shelf with your arms. Keep your gaze forward.</p>
<p><b>7</b> UPWARD FACING DOG</p>  <p><b>INHALE</b></p> <p>Inhale, untuck toes and press hands into the mat as you lift your chest up. Draw the shoulders away from the ears. Keep the core engaged.</p>	<p><b>8</b> DOWNWARD FACING DOG</p>  <p><b>EXHALE</b></p> <p>Tuck the toes under and exhale as you send the hips up and back. Press fingertips into the mat and send the shoulders down your back to make space for your head to move around. Place feet hip width apart and relax heels down. Take five rounds of breath melting your chest further towards your thighs with each exhale.</p>	<p><b>9</b> LOW LUNGE</p>  <p><b>INHALE</b></p> <p>Look to the top of your mat and step the right foot through between your hands. Drop the back knee down. Take three rounds of breath.</p>	<p><b>10</b> FORWARD FOLD</p>  <p><b>EXHALE</b></p> <p>Tuck the back toes and lift the back knee up. Step to the top of your mat and exhale into a forward fold. Keep a soft bend in the knees.</p>	<p><b>11</b> UPWARD SALUTE</p>  <p><b>INHALE</b></p> <p>Inhale and sweep the arms out and up to the sky taking a slight back bend.</p>	<p><b>12</b> PRAYER</p>  <p><b>EXHALE</b></p> <p>Bring palms to touch and exhale as you place hands in prayer over your heart.</p>

Yoga is a yoke between breath, pose and mindfulness. Moving in and out of different yoga poses or holding them for a long time without falling requires focus. By focusing on controlling your breath, instead of the challenging poses, you are able to clear your mind.

As you continue practicing yoga, you will get better at controlling your body's stress, response and breath. Try yoga and experience the benefits of being healthier!

### Great Resources:

Yoga Journal  
Yogaalliance.org

### Classes for Beginners on YouTube:

Yoga with Adriene  
Yoga by Candace



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