

## Say Ohm

Yoga. What comes to mind when you see that word? For some, it brings a sense of calm, causing a deepening of the breath. For others, visions of people in contorted poses come to mind (ever see that yogurt commercial?). Still others think it may be a wacky religion for current or former hippies.



Whatever you think, I assure you that Yoga is neither religion nor wacky. Nor does one need to contort the body into pretzel-like poses. As a certified yoga instructor and practitioner, I offer information on what yoga has to offer the average individual.

One of the main benefits of yoga is learning proper breathing technique. You may not realize it, but right now you may not be breathing to your lungs' capacity. In other words, you may be taking shallow breaths –breathing only in your upper chest. Yoga teaches us to use our full lung capacity, fully inhaling and exhaling so that the belly rises as we inhale and deflates as we exhale. Try this exercise and see if you notice a difference in your pulse rate and stress level:

- ✍ Sit upright in a chair, feet on the floor. Close your eyes to reduce distraction.
- ✍ Relax your shoulders down away from your ears and gently squeeze your shoulder blades together.
- ✍ Lift the top of your head to the ceiling.
- ✍ Cup your hands lightly in your lap
- ✍ Inhale deeply and slowly through your nose – feel the sensation of your belly rising and ribs and chest expanding
- ✍ Exhale deeply and slowly through your nose – feel the belly, ribs, and chest deflate
- ✍ Repeat 5-10 times.

Open your eyes and notice the calm you feel.

With school starting this week and the extra traffic we'll be dealing with, this is a great exercise to practice while sitting in traffic on your daily commute. It's also a good idea to take deep breathing breaks during the day to bring oxygen into the brain and muscles – providing better rejuvenation than that afternoon candy bar (that's another article!).

Yoga also teaches mindfulness, or being present in the moment. Too often in the rush of our busy lives we don't take the time to notice the beauty and wonder around us. Think about it – have you really noticed the sounds and sights of summer these past weeks? Or have the brilliant blooms, delicate hummingbirds, succulent watermelon and ocean waves passed unnoticed because of all the other clutter in your brain? Yoga teaches us to be present in the moment, to connect mind, body and breath thereby bringing something special to the mundane. For many, mindfulness comes when a word or phrase is spoken (aloud or silently). This word, or mantra, helps to provide focus as you breathe (the mind

does tend to wander). The word “ohm” is a traditional mantra used, as it’s sound has a meditative quality and is said to be the “sound of the universe”.

Aside from proper breathing, yoga poses can also help alleviate some of our daily bouts of dis-ease.

Yoga Pose	Helps with:
Seated Spinal Twist	Digestion, elimination
Gate Pose	Improves spinal flexibility; helps respiratory problems
Pigeon Pose	Stretches hip flexors
Seated Forward Bend	Stretches hamstrings
Child’s Pose	Headache
Legs up the wall pose	Fatigue
Cow Faced pose	Shoulder flexibility

I encourage you to look into yoga as a way to enhance your current fitness regimen. Look for certified yoga practitioners and begin slowly. Remember to honor your body’s abilities and limitations. Health Directions offers a variety of yoga classes. Call 791.2113 for information. For more information on yoga and instruction on safely doing poses, log onto [www.yogajournal.com](http://www.yogajournal.com).

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