

Does Yoga Help with the Management of Overweight and Obesity?

In a review published in 2014, yoga's effects on overweight and obesity were examined. After a review of yoga's many substantiated physiological and psychological benefits, and after a discussion of the strengths and limitations of several studies, the authors conclude that yoga may have a beneficial effect on weight maintenance and loss.

The following possible mechanisms are listed: 1) calories are expended during yoga sessions (although several forms of yoga do not involve large caloric expenditures); 2) back pain and joint pain are frequently relieved by yoga practice, so participants may exercise more outside of yoga sessions; 3) yoga promotes mindfulness and decreases stress, so participants may eat less; and 4) participants experience increased mind/ body connectedness as a result of yoga practice and may stop eating as soon as they feel a hint of satiety.

Effects on weight loss or maintenance may be more caused by behavioral changes, rather than increased calorie burning, however many people overeat for emotional reasons, and yoga, with its emphasis on mindful awareness and stress reduction, can help reduce emotional reactivity. Because of these positive effects, yoga may be useful in helping with weight-related issues.

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