

Welcome to Yoga

Guidelines for Beginners and Reminders for the Rest of Us!

Yoga is practised all over the world and provides many benefits. You may be seeking improved body awareness, suppleness, flexibility, toning, relaxation, to manage stress or be looking for an improved sense of wellbeing.

With practice, yoga can help with all of these - benefiting your physical, mental and spiritual health. There are no timetables in yoga or deadlines to meet. Progress will come in its own time and not at a time of your choosing. However, by electing to practise yoga, you have already made the all-important first step.

To help you get the most from your yoga please remember:

- You may be asked to fill in a confidential questionnaire to help the tutor to take account of any special requirements or health issues you may have.
- If you are not confident that you should be undertaking gentle exercise you should consult your doctor. Any specific advice from a health professional should be adhered to regardless of what the rest of the class is doing!
- Try to arrive at class in good time – it helps you to relax. If you arrive late, please be as quiet as possible and take a few moments to settle and warm up properly before joining in.
- Clothing should be loose fitting and comfortable so you can move and breathe easily.
- You should allow at least two hours from your last meal before yoga.
- Take care if wearing jewellery or glasses
- Please turn off mobile phones and audible watches
- Have sufficient extra clothing to put on to remain warm for 15 minutes during the final relaxation. Some people bring a blanket or sleeping bag.
- Use a non-slip mat large enough for your full body length.
- You are better off working with bare feet, especially in standing postures.
- Always breathe through the nose unless otherwise instructed or the nose is blocked.
- Go into and come out of yoga postures slowly, carefully, in control and with body awareness
- There is no competition in yoga. We are all different and you will do your yoga and not anybody else's. Work within YOUR own comfortable body limits at all times. If it hurts it isn't yoga and your body is telling you not to do it - ease back until it becomes comfortable. We can only stretch and lengthen muscles whilst they are relaxed - if you go too far, they will tense to protect themselves from damage. Leave out anything inappropriate to you.
- When practising yoga, be aware of what parts of the body are working, keep the rest of the body completely relaxed and observe the effects of each posture.
- Feel free to ask questions, either during or after the class.

We will be practising hatha yoga which is the most commonly practised form of yoga in the West with the emphasis on the physical yoga postures and breathing. There are also ethical, moral and spiritual layers to yoga but even at its most complete yoga is not a religion, rather a way of living. Yoga neither mandates nor precludes any particular religious beliefs. The word yoga means "oneness" and comes from the Sanskrit word "yug" meaning "to join". This can be viewed in various different ways, sometimes as the union of individual and universal consciousness or more simply as a way of balancing and harmonising our mind, body and spirit.

Specific health precautions

- ❑ With high blood pressure (hypertension), heart conditions, eye problems such as glaucoma or detached retina AVOID
 - Lowering the head beneath the heart
 - Inverted postures
 - Holding the breath in
 - Raising your arms above your head
- ❑ With low blood pressure AVOID
 - Getting up too quickly
 - Holding the breath out
- ❑ If pregnant or menstruating AVOID
 - Lying on your front
 - Strong forward bends
 - Inverted postures
- ❑ If you have a back problem AVOID
 - Excessive backward and forward bends. Gentle dynamic movements are generally beneficial
- ❑ If you have a hiatus hernia
 - AVOID Twists
 - AVOID Backbends such as the cobra
 - FOLLOW the avoidances for High Blood Pressure
- ❑ If you have a knee injury
 - AVOID misaligning the knee with the leg and ankle
 - TAKE CARE with squats and folded leg postures
 - USE extra padding under knees as appropriate
- ❑ If you have varicose veins AVOID
 - Compressing the legs, e.g. kneeling or sitting back on the heels
- ❑ Some postures cause internal movement. Women with IUDs should have regular check ups to ensure things are still in place.
- ❑ Should you become pregnant, please let me know as it has implications for your yoga practice