



National Senior Games Association

Post Office Box 82059 ★ Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70884-2059
225-766-6800 ★ Fax 225-766-9115 ★ nsga@nsga.com

★ www.nsga.com



Humana®

Stretch Your Way to a Healthier Body

By Heather Sumpter

Yoga, a popular form of exercise developed in India more than 5,000 years ago, provides strength through a mind/body connection, increasing relaxation through meditation. There are 5 types of yoga, which include Ashtanga, Bikranm, Hatha, Iyengar, and Vinyasa. Yoga can be performed by any person, regardless of age, gender, or level of physical fitness, and can be performed any place.

It is suggested that yoga can help reduce symptoms of chronic pain, treating multiple types of arthritis by [strengthening muscles and improve range of motion](#). It can also lower blood pressure, reduce insomnia, promote fat reduction, protect against injury, and maintain balanced metabolism. The National Health Interview named yoga within the top 10 complementary medical practices in the US, and according to the National Institute of Health, individuals who practiced yoga had less disability, pain, and depression than those with other conventional treatments.

Yoga can also be mentally beneficial. Though [stretching, controlled breathing, and stress management](#), yoga can help to brighten up a saddened mind. It is more and more frequently being used as a treatment for depression, PTSD, and stress induced anxiety. [This article](#) highlights the best poses for someone using yoga to cope with mental problems.

Anyone can get started with yoga; it is generally safe when practiced with an experienced instructor. Side effects of yoga are low, but poses can be modified as necessary. It is important to speak with your doctor before beginning a yoga program, and should not replace medical care.

Start off slow; listen to your body, understand your limits, and remember that hitting every pose is not the purpose. By focusing on the mind body connection, this complementary form of treatment can produce lasting results. Interested in learning more about yoga in seniors? Check out [this video](#) by the National Institute of Health.

Heather Sumpter, MS , Community Health Educator, SNP

Heather is a Community Health Educator for Humana at Home, in which she provides education and community resources to members based on requests and needs. Prior to her role with Humana at Home, she held numerous other qualified positions, including Clinical Health Coordinator at Coventry Health Center and Group Exercise Instructor and Personal Trainer at the Jewish Community Center. She received a Master of Science in Exercise Physiology and a Bachelor of Science in Exercise Science from the University of Pittsburgh, Her background and education make her a vital member of the Editorial Board.

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