



Information sheet: Yoga therapy

What is yoga therapy?

Originating thousand of years ago in India, yoga is a mind body practice that includes postures, breathing techniques, meditation, and adoption of wholesome action and thought all in the service of personal cultivation. Yoga therapy, a more recent discipline, is the therapeutic application of yoga to mental and physical health conditions. Melding an understanding of the psycho-physiological effects of yoga practices with ancient wisdom and unique client needs, yoga therapists work towards a whole person approach the healing.

Yoga therapy espouses an integrative model of health empowerment to investigate the root cause of suffering, not simply a diagnosed health issue; helping clients in both short and long-term management and transformation of their health.

What does the therapy do?

Yoga therapy, a biopsychosocial approach to well-being, works in a comprehensive way to help the client develop greater health. In some instances yoga therapy may help to alleviate a health condition, where in other situations it may help to mitigate symptoms and support better disease management.

Generally yoga therapy is employed with life style conditions or non-communicable diseases and with a broad range of applications including everything from depression, PTSD, and anxiety disorders, as well as a host of other mental health issues, to cardiovascular conditions, musculoskeletal conditions, chronic

pain, neurodegenerative conditions, respiratory disorders, cancer, type II diabetes, immune disorders, and many more.

What are the training standards?

Yoga therapists undergo additional training after graduating as yoga teachers. The British Council of Yoga Therapy (BCYT) is the UK forum for yoga therapy organisations, promoting standards in yoga therapy and the provision of this therapy. The BCYT proposes committee members to the Complementary and Natural Health Care Council (CNHC), The independent UK regulator for complementary healthcare practitioners to act as their Profession Specific Body evaluating appropriate standards for Yoga Therapists.

Is yoga therapy regulated?

The BCYT accredits yoga therapy courses that meet their core curriculum requirements.

How do I find a yoga therapist?

The CNHC holds a register of recognised yoga therapists. Generally clients find yoga therapists by going on the website of yoga therapy training schools, recommendations from health professionals, or via internet search.

It is important to find a yoga therapist who is appropriately qualified and insured, and who belongs to a respected professional association, so that you can be confident that they meet industry standards and abide by a strict code of conduct.

Are there any safety concerns for yoga therapy?

As yoga therapy is tailored to your unique needs and ability it is generally safe. However as with any movement based practice there is the possibility that injury can occur. If you have any concerns speak with your doctor before seeking a yoga therapist.



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Is there an evidence base?

A growing collection of clinical trials and reviews find psychological and physical health benefits associated with the therapeutic application of yoga. Previously research was criticised for small groups sizes and lack of rigour, however this is changing. Studies are becoming more rigorous and remain encouraging enough for health systems to consider the integration of yoga. The most common reported psychological research findings include improved mood, stress reduction, better emotion regulation, improved distress tolerance, and body awareness. Physiological research reveals greater brain functioning and connectivity, positive changes in neurochemicals, improved regulation of the autonomic nervous system, reduced blood pressure, improved respiratory markers, and reductions in inflammatory markers. For more information on research please visit:

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/>