Yoga May Encourage Weight Maintenance or Loss

A new study led by researchers at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in Seattle, WA, has found that regular yoga practice may help prevent middle-age spread in normal-weight people. Yoga may also promote weight loss in those who are overweight.

How can yoga help with weight loss when most people practice a yoga that does not burn enough calories to lose weight? According to the study’s leader author, Alan R. Kristal, Dr.P.H., it has more to do with increased body awareness than the physical activity itself.

“I think it has to do with the way that yoga makes you more aware of your body. So when you’ve eaten enough food, you’re sensitive to the feeling of being full, and this makes it much easier to stop eating before you’ve eaten too much,” said Kristal.

Study co-author and yoga teacher Denise Benitez offers the following suggestions for enhancing one’s yoga practice. These tips may be particularly helpful for those who wish to maintain or lose weight:

1. Practice in a room without mirrors, and pay more attention to your internal experience than to your outer performance.
2. Learn to feel sensations more and more subtly, so that you become deeply involved in and curious about small movements, sometimes called micro-movements.
3. In your poses, find an edge for yourself where you are challenged but not overwhelmed. At this edge, practice maintaining a clear, open and accepting mental state.
4. Give yourself permission to rest when you feel overworked.
5. Pay close attention to what you are saying to yourself as you practice, and make an intentional effort to appreciate your own efforts and innate goodness.
6. Go to class faithfully, arrive early, and talk to a few people in your class before class begins.
7. Buy your own yoga mat and bring it to class.
8. Realize that the development of qualities like patience, discipline, wisdom, right effort, kindness, gratitude and many others will arise from your yoga practice. These qualities create a steady and soft mind.
9. Find a teacher who offers a balance of gentleness and firmness and whose teaching inspires you to practice from your highest self.
10. Recognize that simply attending class is a major statement of courage, self care, and positive momentum. Realize that you are inspiring others as you become more true to your deepest desires.


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