

# Don't Suffer This Winter



## Boost Your Immunity With Yoga

The physical and physiological benefits of yoga are well documented - improved flexibility, increased muscle definition, enhanced body tone and alignment; you'll feel taller, look slimmer, have more energy, sleep better and learn how to deal more efficiently with the stresses and tensions of everyday life. But did you know your yoga practice also boosts your immune system as a bonus?

Regular exercise, particularly yoga, is not just beneficial to how we look on the outside, but even more importantly it tones and strengthens the insides of our bodies improving organ function, balancing our hormones and naturally detoxifying and oxygenating the body.

If you tend to catch a cold or cough as soon as we have one wintery day or consistently have digestive issues, irregular sleep patterns, suffer from various allergies, contract stomach bugs or have skin breakouts, then a regular yoga practice will certainly help you become stronger on the inside so you'll catch far less viral infections and diseases, and if you do, you'll find yourself returning more speedily to optimum health.



Practising yoga helps regulate the thyroid and blood pressure levels, strengthens the digestive system and eases menstrual cramps and PMT and improves general all round wellbeing, clearing the mind from perhaps consistently analysing the old same thoughts and fears.

Focusing on the body and your breath during a posture ensures you are in the 'now' - the present moment - and with regular practice being in the now will become less challenging (hopefully!) and more natural, so you'll feel less anxious and fatigued, two mind/body states that certainly lower the immune system.



Backbends, such as Cobra and Bridge open the chest, strengthen the upper spine and activate the thymus gland that sits behind the breastbone and the primary organ for immune function. Also Bow, Pigeon and Fish poses stimulate the thymus and immune systems and by breathing steadily, evenly and comfortably, aids the nervous system to relax.

To enhance the flow of the lymphatic system - the body's defence system that keeps our internal fluids in balance - practice inversions. Shoulder stand, Plough and Legs up the Wall poses all aid the smooth distribution of the immune cells around the body.



To also boost our immune system, become more aware of creating a lifestyle of balance - so review your diet. When you wake each morning drink a glass of water with some freshly squeezed lemon juice, eat mainly raw organic food when you can, reduce or cut out alcohol, eat adequate protein and eliminate fizzy sugary drinks. Exercise outdoors and socialise with friends who make you belly laugh. Studies have shown that laughter naturally strengthens the immune system and helps lift depression.



Treating yourself to regular massage will improve the flow of nutrients to the muscles and research at Harvard University shows practising mindful meditation is a powerful tool to improve immune and cognitive function.

If you have tried yoga and find it is not for you today, don't give up - try a different teacher or a different style another day. Find what resonates with you so you look forward to practising everyday at home as well as attending class, and as soon as you feel (and see) the benefits, you'll certainly become hooked along with improved immunity and a sense of serenity and peace!

