

Practicing Yoga for Chronic Headache

Yoga is a great exercise option for children and teens with chronic headaches. The best yoga poses and techniques for headache vary from person to person, depending on headache type and symptoms. Talk to your neurologist before choosing to do yoga.

Who can do Yoga?

Almost anyone can do yoga! There are lots of different yoga poses, breathing and relaxation techniques for all shapes, sizes and abilities. The main things to remember is to do yoga on an empty stomach, wear comfortable clothes you can move in, ask the yoga teacher or therapist questions if something is confusing, and to HAVE FUN!

What is Yoga?

Yoga is a set of mind-body poses and practices created in India over 2000 years ago. People practiced yoga to help reduce the stress of life. Today, people all over the world use yoga to relax, calm down and keep their bodies and minds healthy and active. Yoga includes physical poses and breathing and calming techniques that many headache sufferers find very helpful.

What type of Yoga is best for chronic headache?

Yoga that is relaxing and slow-moving is best for chronic headaches. Find a class that focuses on stretching rather than a class that flows quickly from one pose into another (sometimes referred to as “vinyasa”). The breathing techniques can help calm the mind. The physical poses stretch and loosen muscles that tense up when you’re in pain and stressed.

How do I know if Yoga is helping?

Obviously, if yoga helps get rid your headache pain, it is working. Yoga can also help you relax and calm down, so that you’re not as stressed to begin with. You know yoga is helping if you feel like you can cope with the stress and challenges of your everyday life, even if you have a headache. Kids and parents tell us that yoga helps them get on with the activities that matter most in their life, like school, favorite hobbies and hanging out with friends and family.

What other benefits come from doing Yoga?

Besides helping you calm down and lower your pain, yoga can also help you stay fit. Regular exercise (30 minutes at least three times a week) is important for people who have chronic headaches. Yoga may help you feel more flexible and stronger. Also, a lot of kids and teens tell us they feel more “clear-headed” when doing yoga.

Are there poses to stay away from?

It’s best not to do yoga in a heated room or that moves quickly (such as the vinyasa style mentioned above). People with different types of headaches need to take different kinds of precautions with yoga. For instance, if you experience nausea or dizziness with your headaches, or if pressure changes trigger headaches, stay away from a lot of forward bending. But if you don’t experience these symptoms, inversions (like head stand) and forward folds may help your headaches.

How much does Yoga cost?

Most recreation centers offer yoga classes, and this can be an affordable way to get started. Yoga studios drop-in rates usually range from \$14-20. Many studios offer first timer's deals, where you can try out a bunch of classes for a limited time at a special rate.

RESOURCES

If your headaches leave you stressed and you can't sleep, you can practice Yoga Nidra, a deep relaxation technique. Follow this link and scroll to the bottom of the page where you'll click on "Listen to a Yoga Nidra relaxation recording."

<http://www.childrencolorado.org/departments/psych/programs/creative-arts-therapy/yoga-therapy>

Also, below is a link to a website catering to youth yoga programs in the Denver Metro area. Keep in mind that these classes and programs aren't necessarily geared towards headache sufferers, so make sure to find classes listed "Restorative" and/or "Relaxing."

<http://kidsyogaguide.com/>