

## Yoga Improves Quality of Life During Radiation Therapy for Breast Cancer

Women who participated in a yoga program while receiving radiation therapy for breast cancer improved their ability to be physically active and socially involved, lowered their levels of fatigue and frequency of sleep disorders, and improved their own perception of their overall health, according to a new study.

In this study, 61 women with breast cancer who were receiving radiation therapy were randomly assigned to attend biweekly yoga classes during the entire course of radiation therapy or to be on a waiting list (as a comparison group). The yoga classes included stretching, breathing exercises, and other relaxation techniques. A week after the radiation therapy was finished, the women completed questionnaires that measured different aspects of their quality of life.

After taking into account factors that may influence quality of life, such as stage of cancer or time since diagnosis, the researchers found that women in the yoga classes reported better quality of life when compared with the control group. However, researchers found no differences between the two groups in signs of depression and anxiety, two additional quality-of-life measures assessed in the study.

"This is the first study to incorporate yoga as part of the treatment plan for cancer patients," said Lorenzo Cohen, PhD, Associate Professor and Director of the Integrative Medicine Program at the University of Texas M. D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston and the study's lead author. "Because yoga deals with both mind and body, we thought that cancer patients would benefit both physically and emotionally, and we found that to be the case."

### What This Means For Patients

This study suggests that participating in a yoga program can improve a person's quality of life during cancer treatment. Patients may want to ask their doctors about participating in an approved yoga program. It is important to note that a possible reason for quality of life improvement of the women in the yoga study could be due to the emotional and social support they received from participating in class, and not the yoga itself. To study this issue, the research team is planning a new study with an "active" control group, in which patients who are not participating in yoga will take a class that teaches general stretching exercises.

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