

Yoga has been around for thousands of years. Yoga is a practice that started in India, and is now very popular in the United States and around the world. It has gained a lot of attention lately — maybe because it is a fun and easy way for both adults and kids to feel healthy and Happy.

The word “yoga” means “union” in Sanskrit, the ancient language of India. Yoga is the “union” or coming together of mind (thoughts and feelings) and physical body. Many people feel an overall sense of well-being when they practice yoga.

There are many aspects to yoga. In short yoga is a system of physical exercise or postures, called asanas. These asanas build strength, flexibility and confidence. Yoga is also about breathing, called pranayama, which helps calm and refresh the body and mind.

Yoga for Kids

Yoga is a great way to promote both physical and mental wellness in children, yoga can also build confidence and self-esteem, as well as help to improve concentration and focus.

Other benefits of yoga include promoting balance, flexibility, coordination and strength. children (and adults) can learn from yoga.

Activity Corner

The beauty of yoga is that children can practice alone, with a friend or in a group. Many schools are now teaching yoga to young children, and there are many after-school classes for children and their families to get involved in. Everyone can enjoy yoga—from tots to great-grandparents!

What You Will Need:

- Quiet area
- Yoga mat, towel, blanket or non-skid floor
- Comfortable clothes that allow for movement

Getting Ready to Practice Yoga

- Warm up for 5 minutes before you start Yoga (e.g., walk in place, walk around the house).
- Do not force yourself into a yoga pose.
- The longer you hold each pose, the more challenging it becomes. Start by holding each pose for 2 breaths and slowly increase the number of breaths as you feel yourself improve in balance and endurance.
- Do NOT hold your breath at any time.

- Protect your back by keeping your spine straight and your knees slightly bent when you bend forward from any standing position.
- Stop if you feel any pain or discomfort.



Professional organizations that focus on children also support the idea behind yoga. For example, The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) recommend that children should participate in activities that support the development of the whole child. This is exactly what yoga is about.

For more information on Yoga visit:

www.nextgenerationyoga.com

Source: Child Care Food Program Roundtable,
Nutrition Edition, Issue 39

Simple Yoga Poses other side of

Activity Corner. ➤

Simple Yoga Poses for Children

The following simple yoga poses can introduce the theory of yoga to children while helping them to stay active. Try teaching children a couple of poses during regular play, as a lead-in to quiet time, or as part of a full routine.

LOTUS POSE

When it's time to quiet down and tune out the distractions of the day for a few minutes, **Lotus Pose** is the perfect posture. Keep the back straight, the shoulders down from the ears, and the eyes closed. Breathe deep. Hands can rest palms on the knees or in the position shown.



COBBLER'S POSE

Put palms together, and count to 10, breathing quietly. Make sure the back is straight and the bottoms of the feet touch. Count to 10 a few more times, breathing deeply throughout.

CHILD'S POSE

Start by sitting with the bottom on the heels. The arms can remain at the side; extend forward away from the body; or the child can cross his/her arms and lay the forehead on them. This is a terrific pose to relax the eyes, shoulders, and back and also rejuvenate the mind.



LOCUST POSE VARIATION

This modification of Locust Pose includes "Superman Arms." Have the children lie down flat on the floor with their arms and legs extended. Contract the belly and rise upward on an exhale, lifting the arms and legs a couple of inches off the ground. Make sure this doesn't strain the lower back too much—if he or she does, lower the arms and legs a bit. For fun, make flying noises.



WARRIOR POSE

Begin this pose by spreading the legs, then turn the left foot in and the right foot out. Raise the arms and on an exhale, bend over the right foot, keeping the knee over the toes. Breathe. To repeat on the other side, straighten the knee, lower the arms, and turn the right foot in, the left foot out

Sources:

<http://www.buzzle.com>;

<http://www.yoga.lovetoknow.com>

Association for Child Development, *Potpourri*,

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