



The role of diet in Yoga therapy

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Abstract

A true “Yogic Diet” is based on Ahimsa, which is a concept that means that no harm should ever come to a conscious living being. Therefore, a true “yogic diet” will be vegan. That is certainly an option, but for the purpose of this publication we will discuss food and overall nutrition as it contributes to your physical, mental and emotional well-being, which are all focal points of yoga fitness. Of all the elements that contribute to overall fitness and health, diet plays a key role in helping you achieve your goals, and yoga is no exception. In fact, one of the most powerful means of healing and balancing the body and mind with yoga is proper nutrition. Yoga is comprised of various poses, known as asana, which include bending in downward and reverse positions that puts pressure on the stomach organs, and can cause feelings of discomfort as food gets pushed up during the moves. So, it is important to not eat too close to the time of practice. It can also cause constipation. Mood swings from hunger and low blood sugar do not support a proper workout and will interfere when doing yoga, so going to class hungry is never a good idea. Eating too much or the wrong foods can result in an overall feeling of belatedness and fullness that will interfere with the workout, and especially the poses. Lastly, one of the most important benefits of a yoga workout is the inducement of increased blood circulation, which, will be directed only to the digestive process when one is too full, in effect, wasting its benefits.

Keywords: yogic diet, mood swings, constipation

Introduction

A true “Yogic Diet” is based on Ahimsa, which is a concept that means that no harm should ever come to a conscious living being. Therefore, a true “yogic diet” will be vegan. That is certainly an option, but for the purpose of this publication we will discuss food and overall nutrition as it contributes to your physical, mental and emotional well-being, which are all focal points of yoga fitness. Of all the elements that contribute to overall fitness and health, diet plays a key role in helping you achieve your goals, and yoga is no exception. In fact, one of the most powerful means of healing and balancing the body and mind with yoga is proper nutrition.

Reasons why Nutrition is Important for Yoga Practice

1. It is what heals us, as wholesome food is essential to make yoga and any other fitness plan work much more effectively.
2. A proper diet that includes nutritious food delivers the optimal amounts of nutrients to your body when you are engaged in yoga.
3. Your body can't produce all those nutrients on its own, and therefore it's important to consume good food that supports a yogic lifestyle and to refine and solidify the results you want to achieve.
4. To reach optimal energy levels. You may find some modern-day yoga practitioners a little worn out, and tired and the reason is they train like yogis, but they don't eat like them.
5. When you perform yoga and fill your daily diet with proper nutrients to compliment the physical

engagement, not only will you notice significant improvement in performance, but it will also help to fight the effects of aging.

Eating before yoga class

Yoga is comprised of various poses, known as asana, which, include bending in downward and reverse positions that puts pressure on the stomach organs, and can cause feelings of discomfort as food gets pushed up during the moves. So, it is important to not eat too close to the time of practice. It can also cause constipation. Mood swings from hunger and low blood sugar do not support a proper workout and will interfere when doing yoga, so going to class hungry is never a good idea. Eating too much or the wrong foods can result in an overall feeling of belatedness and fullness that will interfere with the workout, and especially the poses. Lastly, one of the most important benefits of a yoga workout is the inducement of increased blood circulation, which, will be directed only to the digestive process when one is too full, in effect, wasting its benefits.

Good Foods before a Yoga Workout

Going to class starving or on a completely empty stomach is not a good idea, so it is important to eat the right foods at the right time. Typically, 45 minutes to 1 hour before the workout provides the appropriate amount of time for the body to digest the foods listed below for the best in pre-yoga workout nutrition. To fuel your workout, without negative effects, consider these suggestions:

Do not eat foods high in fat and protein, it's best to stick with complex carbs.

Foods low on the glycolic index, including certain fruits, and low-fat yogurt that provide the proper energy for longer periods of time.

Foods, like candy, chips and others that are high on the glycolic index will result in decreased performance and a crash and burn feeling during the workout.

Stick with small portions and again, do not eat right before class.

The Best Foods for Yoga

Fruit is a good choice. Bananas are rich in potassium that interacts with sodium levels in the body to maintain proper levels of hydration. They also help prevent cramps and bloating. Pears are another good option as they are non-acidic and have a lot of fiber, which provides satiation with feeling bloated. Apples are recommended because they also contain fiber, are low in sugar and provide proper hydration. Raisins are recommended because they have natural sugar that can energize you for the workout. They are also portable and can be eaten anywhere. Prunes, like bananas are loaded with potassium, are ultra-portable and the natural sugars also provide the optimal energy without the crash and burn. A small serving of oatmeal, such as, ½ a cup is a great pre-yoga meal, it is easy to digest, provides lasting energy and will not make you sick while doing the poses. Another miracle food that has so many wonderful nutritional characteristics, almonds are a great pre-yoga snack that will keep the blood sugars level and keep you satisfied without being too full or getting bloated. Choose plain, unsalted raw varieties to get vitamin E, potassium and magnesium, all of which help with hydration during yoga. Avocados are nature's miracle food, and they contain the ideal combination of nutrients to ingest before yoga. They have 60% more magnesium and potassium than bananas, and are loaded with good fats that lower cholesterol and feed muscle. They satisfy, without being over filling and will not interfere when doing yoga poses. Dark chocolate works to keep blood sugars stable and it also helps to increase blood flow to the brain, which allows you to better concentrate and focus throughout the yoga workout. This is important as the "mindfulness" aspect of yoga plays a significant role. Dark chocolate also has phenyl ethylamine and caffeine, both of which increase alertness without creating nervousness or the jitters such as seen with coffee.

Alkaline Food

Alkaline foods are essential to health and healing. Too much acid in the blood stream results in liver, kidney and heart problems.

Heart: Acidity increases the thickness and viscosity of the blood which inhibits circulation and weakens it.

Liver: For the liver too, much acidity makes the liver have to work harder to detoxify the bloodstream and weakens it over time, this interferes with healthy glycogen processes that causes one to feel weak and inhibits energy levels.

Kidneys: Acidity in the kidneys increases waste materials that can lead to kidney stones.

Best Alkaline food options

Eating an alkaline diet requires you to cut out all processed sugars, and to never eat anything that contains corn syrup, agave, maltose, or aspartame. To maintain health, 60% of the diet should consist of alkaline forming foods and 40% of

acid forming foods. To restore health, 80% alkaline versus 20% acid forming foods.

Here are the best alkaline foods

Start your morning with a fresh, raw and organic cucumber, it is alkaline, prevents dehydration, and plays a vital role in revitalizing your hair, skin and nails. Fresh cucumber juice is a great option.

Herbs

Herbs have great flavor and they are nutrient dense. Yogis eat a lot of herbs that help them to maintain optimal health levels. Some of the main herbs you should include in your diet:

Ashwagandha (kills bacteria and improves immunity)

Coriander (treats indigestion, fevers, respiratory infections and allergies)

Ginger (fixes indigestion, helps nausea and has numerous health benefits)

Boswellia (relieves pain naturally)

Turmeric (reduces inflammation and enhances the immune system)

Neem (eradicates bad bacteria, parasites, fungus, and viruses)

Filtered clean water

Ancient Yogis drank the purest spring water for numerous benefits. Luckily, these days we don't have to look for a mountain spring, we can just buy some bottled water, or simply get a high-quality water filter to avoid tap water at all times.

Tap water contains sodium fluoride that's poisonous to our central nervous system, and contributes to the aging effect by eliminating good bacteria in our system.

Adding High Quality Salt to Drinking Water

Adding a pinch of high-quality salt like 'Himalayan Crystal Salt' or 'Sea Salt' per a gallon of water helps to balance the water in our body, and the water becomes much more effective at hydrating our system.

Good Fats

One essential part of a good yogi diet is to feed the body good fats that are rich in nutrients, easy to digest and provide optimal energy. Heart health is a concern for everyone, so eating heart healthy fats is always recommended.

Additionally, a proper yogi diet includes foods rich in omega 3 essential fatty acids, such as, salmon, coconuts, purified butter, and raw soaked seeds.

These are easily digestible and maintain a balance in keeping the sugar/insulin levels low, which, increases life expectancy and leads to feeling younger.

Mineral rich raw foods

When eating for longevity and higher consciousness, focus on raw foods that are higher in minerals. Most minerals are destroyed, and become useless when food is cooked because essential enzymes are disintegrated at higher temperatures.

Raw food has the ability to keep the body's immune system health and allows the body to cleanse and flush out harmful toxins.

Raw foods include fresh fruits, seeds, nuts and vegetables and organic is always a good choice.

Foods in Moderation

In order to stay healthy and maintain healthy weight management, which is one of the reasons millions are doing yoga it is important to eat in moderation.

Our society as a whole is all about excess. Most people eat much more food than their body needs, as reflected by the huge portions served at restaurants and the “super-size” meals promoted at fast food joints.

The ultimate solution to living a healthier and longer life is eating in moderation and eating only as many calories as your body needs, based on individual activity levels.

You need to be able to control your consumption of food to prevent unhealthy overeating that will not only hinder your yoga workouts, but, your health and weight too.

Note that obesity is the number one cause of the many conditions that result in early deaths each year in the United States.

Various research studies have shown that those who eat in moderation live longer than those who don't.

Heal your body and prolong life

Remember that proper nutrition is like medicine that you take every day and so it is the most important factor in keeping good health and thus maximizing your life.

Following the general principles of eating right will produce optimum results.

Eating moderate proportions of fresh whole natural foods is the key to an effective yoga diet.

Choose organic fruits, vegetables and meat products.

Eat a lot of raw vegetables and whole grains.

Eat for nutrition, not to satisfy emotions or for pleasure.

Eat fruit, vegetables and nuts every single day.

Drink alcohol in moderation, and preferably not at all.

Eliminate junk food, processed foods and sugar.

Avoid spicy food.

Stay hydrated by drinking lots of fresh water, green tea and 100% pure vegetable juices.

Juicing

One of the best ways to get pure nutrition into your body is through juicing. Juicing has become one of the most popular activities in health and well-being, and is one of the best ways to benefit from the power of raw produce in an easy to digest and eat method.

Conclusion

Using a home juicer allows you to easily create tasty and highly nutritious concoctions from various fruits and vegetables. This is truly the purest form of nutrition and it can make it easier to incorporate vegetables you might not like into your daily diet. Juicing is great for weight loss, nutrition and for a yogic lifestyle. Optimal health comes from the inside out, and if you will be performing demanding workouts, such as, yoga, or any other, you need to properly fuel your body before, after and in between workouts. So many people suffer from obesity, poor blood circulation, Type 2 diabetes, lack of strength and agility, stress, anxiety, high blood pressure and many other conditions, all of which can be helped by yoga.

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