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The yoga way to wellness

Doctor and yoga practitioner Ananda Balayogi Bhavanani on how asanas can help the body and mind to get into shape. DEEPA H Ramakrishnan writes

Photo: T. Singaravelou



Stay fit More and more people are taking to yoga

Jogging, walking, swimming, aerobics, cycling, pumping weights, dieting... there's a lot you can do to loose flab and look trim.

Yoga today has many takers, who believe it is a healthy way to shed those extra kilos, says Ananda Balayogi Bhavanani, chairman of Yoganjali Natyalayam. A yoga practitioner since the age of four and a doctor by profession, Dr. Ananda, who teaches yoga has recently brought out a DVD titled "Yoga for weight loss".

Specific asanas

"We have been careful in choosing the asanas for the DVD. They can be done by anyone and are not risky. Asanas such as surya namaskar and surya nadi pranayama stimulate the metabolism while those like navasana that is done standing tighten muscular structure. Some twisting postures help redistribute the excess fat and also burns it up. These postures also simulate the pancreas and liver, which are important in digestion. We have also included postures that stimulate the thyroid gland because when it doesn't function properly one tends to gain weight," says Dr. Ananda.

The DVD contains basic warming up asanas, asanas done in the standing, sitting, lying and head down positions. It also has a demonstration of pranayama for weight reduction, yogic relaxation kriyas and three different schedules to maintain yogic practices after a couple of months.

The pranayamas for weight reduction are surya nadi pranayama, kukkriya pranayama, sheetali pranayama and kavi pranayama. Those performed standing include hastha kona kriya, trikona asana, uddiyana bandha and agnisara kriya. Vajra asana, danda kriya, vakra asana, ardha matsyendra Asana, ushra asana and paschimottana asana are done sitting.

Meena Ramanathan, who has been practicing yoga for nearly 10 years says, "Not just weight loss, yoga has a lot more benefits. It boosts your confidence, helps beat depression and relaxes the body and mind. Over the years, I have lost almost 10 kilos." Meena teaches yoga to children at the Saday Special School in Puducherry. "These children now are more physically fit and have a better hand-eye coordination." Not just yogasanas, Dr. Ananda recommends a diet low in carbohydrates, rich in fibre, moderate in protein and low in fat. According to him, "It is better to have small frequent meals rather than missing meals or a haphazard eating pattern. About 40 per cent of the diet should be made up of raw, fresh food as well as natural seasonal food. Avoid soft drinks and processed food that have no nutritional value. Try not to read the newspaper or watch TV while eating since you may overeat. Walk whenever possible. Cycling, skipping and swimming are compatible with yoga therapy for weight reduction."

Dr. Ananda warns that nobody should expect wonders. "One can start feeling the difference after a minimum of three months. And that this DVD should be used in addition to guidance from a yoga guru. What is important is that yoga should be practised regularly. You can take a few sips of water while you do yoga because water has nutrients. But never do yoga after eating."

Dr. Ananda has also brought out DVDs on topics including "Pranayama" and "Mudra fields of energy", which help generate and utilise the vital energies of the body and work on the nervous and muscular systems. He has also done DVDs on breathing disorders and meditation.

The DVDs are available in English, Spanish, French and Hindi. They are being made in Tamil and Italian as well. The DVDs have been produced by Super Audios, Chennai.

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