

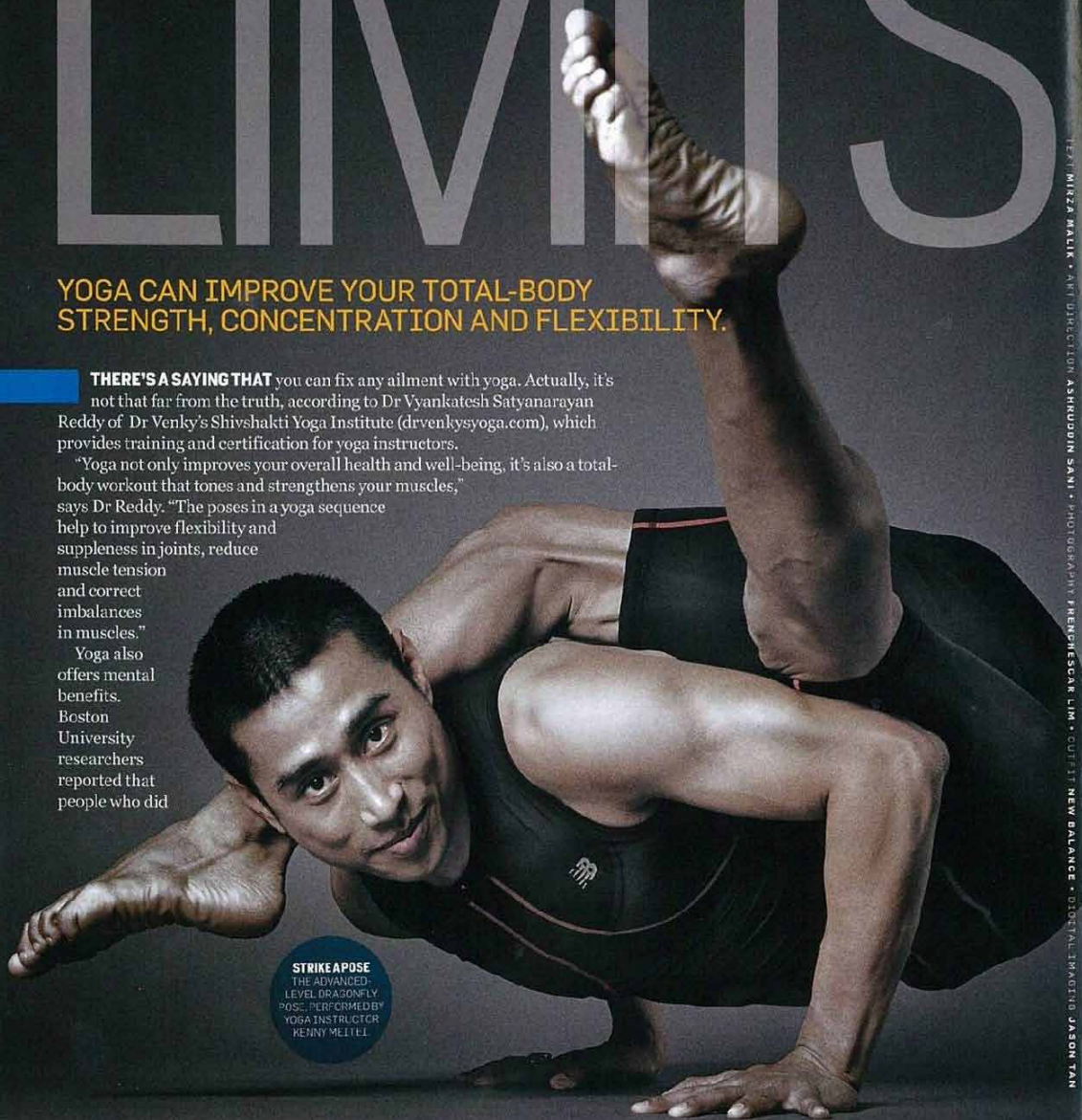
# BEYOND YOUR LIMITS

YOGA CAN IMPROVE YOUR TOTAL-BODY STRENGTH, CONCENTRATION AND FLEXIBILITY.

**THERE'S A SAYING THAT** you can fix any ailment with yoga. Actually, it's not that far from the truth, according to Dr Vyankatesh Satyanarayan Reddy of Dr Venky's Shivshakti Yoga Institute ([drvenkysyoga.com](http://drvenkysyoga.com)), which provides training and certification for yoga instructors.

"Yoga not only improves your overall health and well-being, it's also a total-body workout that tones and strengthens your muscles," says Dr Reddy. "The poses in a yoga sequence help to improve flexibility and suppleness in joints, reduce muscle tension and correct imbalances in muscles."

Yoga also offers mental benefits. Boston University researchers reported that people who did



**STRIKE POSE**  
THE ADVANCED-LEVEL DRAGONFLY POSE, PERFORMED BY YOGA INSTRUCTOR HENRY MELTEL

TEXT: MIRZA HAQUE • ART DIRECTION: ASHROUDIN SANI • PHOTOGRAPHY: PHENOMESCAR LIM • OUTFIT: NEW BALANCE • ORBITAL TRACKING: JASON TAN

yoga weekly boosted their levels of Gaba, a brain chemical that reduces anxiety, by 27 per cent. "The intense focus which is required to maintain a pose will help boost your alertness and concentration span," says Kenny Meitei, yoga instructor at Pure Yoga (pure-yoga.com).

The fitness, health or mental benefits of yoga will vary according to the discipline you practise.

"But regardless of the type of yoga you choose, it's important that you pick it up at a pace you're comfortable with," says Ceri James, yoga instructor, Bikram Original Hot Yoga (bikramoriginalhotyoga.com)

Here, we look at five yoga disciplines and their merits.

## TONE YOUR MUSCLES GRADUALLY

### HATHA YOGA

► **WHAT IT IS:** A gentle form that's suitable for beginners. A session typically starts with a calming segment, followed by a breathing exercise. A sequence of poses is then introduced to warm up and evenly stretch the muscles. The session ends with a relaxation segment.

► **THE BENEFITS:** "Hatha yoga helps to strengthen the muscles in various parts of your body gradually," says Meitei.

- **CLASS DURATION:** 60-90 minutes
- **CALORIE BURN:** 175 per hour
- **SAME AS:** A slow walk
- **GETTING STARTED:** Many

yoga centres offer Hatha yoga classes. "It's increasingly popular among men seeking to increase their flexibility and strength, and fight stress," Meitei says.

## DETOX YOUR SYSTEM

### BIKRAM ORIGINAL HOT YOGA

► **WHAT IT IS:** This is practised in a room heated to 40.5 deg C. You'll learn 26 postures and various breathing techniques. Classes are usually guided by an instructor.

► **THE BENEFITS:** "Bikram Original Hot Yoga promotes increased circulation throughout the body.

Ligaments, muscles and tendons are stretched, strengthened and toned in this workout," James says.

- **CLASS DURATION:** 90 minutes
- **CALORIE BURN:** 630 per hour
- **SAME AS:** Jogging for one hour
- **GETTING STARTED:** "For your safety, this form of yoga must be practised at a certified Bikram studio under the supervision of a qualified Bikram Yoga instructor," says James.

## STRENGTHEN YOUR MID-SECTION

### CORE YOGA

► **WHAT IT IS:** This form stimulates and strengthens your core muscles, such as the abs, back, hips and pelvis.

► **THE BENEFITS:** "Good core

## BREATHE THE BLUES AWAY >>

Breathing correctly not only helps the oxygenation process of the body, but also reduces anger, anxiety and stress levels. Do this breathing exercise, which takes 2 to 3 minutes, daily.

- 1 Tuck your index and middle fingers of your right hand into your palm and cover your nostrils with them, while placing the thumb by your right nostril, and your ring and little fingers by your left.
- 2 Block your right nostril with your thumb. Inhale through your left nostril. Then move your thumb away to open your right nostril, and block your left nostril with your ring and little finger. Then exhale through your right nostril.
- 3 Now, repeat this technique, but inhale through your right nostril and exhale through your left. This process of taking 2 breaths this way counts as 1 complete alternate nostril breath. If you're feeling stressed or anxious, you should feel calmer and be able to breathe better at the end of this exercise, says Mohankumar Rajaraman, yoga instructor, True Yoga.

strength ensures that your posture is straight and your organs are well supported. It also helps to alleviate back pain, promotes better blood circulation and improves oxygen flow in the body," says Adinath Chowdury, yoga instructor, True Yoga (trueyoga.com.sg). "Besides, it also helps to burn fat rapidly."

- **CLASS DURATION:** 60 minutes
- **CALORIE BURN:** 180 per hour
- **SAME AS:** A slow walk
- **GETTING STARTED:** Core yoga is suitable for beginners. It also benefits athletes, such as golfers and runners, in that it helps to develop their core strength. "As Core Yoga classes will make you sweat buckets, always remember to drink lots of water before each class," says Chowdury.

## BOOST YOUR ATHLETICISM

### ASHTANGA YOGA

► **WHAT IT IS:** This system is said to have originated between 200BC and 250AD. "Ashtanga yoga is a vigorous practice of Hatha yoga that emphasises breathing, gestures and locks (tightening of your various muscles), concentration and meditation," says Gajendra Badwal, yoga instructor, True Yoga.

► **THE BENEFITS:** "The practice can help improve strength and stamina, and tone the entire body," explains Badwal.

► **CLASS DURATION:**

60-90 minutes

► **CALORIE BURN:** 300 per hour

► **SAME AS:** A brisk walk

► **GETTING STARTED:** Having basic knowledge of yoga is helpful. Beginners can choose variations of postures that suit their level of flexibility and strength. "The instructor should ensure that each person practices within his abilities," says Badwal.

## GET A DEEPER STRETCH

### YIN YOGA

► **WHAT IT IS:** Yin yoga helps stretch tight joints and muscles, and each pose lasts three to six minutes," says Meitei. "As the poses are meant for deep stretching, there is not much effort involved in balance. Hence, these poses can be maintained for a long time with minimum effort."

► **THE BENEFITS:** "Yin yoga loosens tight muscles, tissues and joints. As these parts of your body are stretched regularly, they become more supple and you'll generally feel lighter," says Meitei.

- **CLASS DURATION:** 75-90 minutes
- **CALORIE BURN:** 170 per hour
- **SAME AS:** A slow walk
- **GETTING STARTED:** This form of yoga targets areas that are rarely stretched, focusing on the lower back, hips and legs. It's ideal for desk-bound workers, or people who experience muscle stiffness due to strenuous workouts. **MM**

## GETTING MORE OUT OF YOGA >>

► **LOSE YOUR GUT** A study in the *Journal Of The American Dietetic Association* shows that yoga increases mindful eating which, in turn, results in less weight gain over time. Try this: Inhale while counting slowly to 5; exhale and count slowly to 5; repeat 3 to 5 times before you begin eating.

► **IMPROVE IN-BED ENDURANCE** Men with premature ejaculation who practised an hour of yoga a day for 12 weeks were able to triple the length of time they lasted during intercourse, a *Journal Of Sexual Medicine* study says. "Yoga breathing teaches men to control anxiety, while the movements strengthen their pelvic muscles," says study author Dr Vikas Dhikav.

► **BOOST YOUR MOOD** Yoga stretching can help relieve depression, report Boston University researchers. Try this: Place your hands against the wall at chest level. Step back until your body is bent 90 degrees at the hips, and push against the wall, keeping your neck in line with your spine. Hold for 2 minutes.