DAILY MAIL (London)

November 1, 2011 Tuesday

**YOGA 'IS BETTER AT TREATING A BAD BACK THAN GOING TO THE DOCTOR'**  
**BYLINE:** BY SOPHIE BORLAND HEALTH REPORTER  
  
**LENGTH:** 454 words

ITS fans claim it helps the body fight aches and pains through a range of stretches.

But it would seem that the ancient practice of yoga really does work Z and it could be even better than going to the doctor.

Patients with a common form of lower back pain who did three months of classes in the therapeutic discipline were able to do daily chores they previously would have found impossible, say scientists.

And some claimed the effects continued for a year after they had finished the sessions.

The extent to which yoga helps the body and mind remains highly contested however and only last week researchers from the U.S. claimed it brought no improvement to wellbeing.

But a team from the University of York have looked at its effects on around 300 patients with chronic lower back pain, a common condition which affects one in five adults in any given year.

Half followed a 12-week course of yoga, with specific exercise focusing on their back.

The remainder carried on visiting their GP and were given painkillers, exercises to follow and in some cases physiotherapy.

The findings, published in the Annals of Internal Medicine, show that after three months patients who had been to the yoga classes were able to do 30 per cent more daily activities than those who had carried on seeing their family doctor.

However, yoga did not seem to relieve patients' pain, it only enabled them to carry out more household chores, such as gardening.

And 12 patients who had completed the yoga reported suffering episodes of severe pain, which may have been caused by their stretches.

Nonetheless the researchers claimed yoga helped patients feel more confident in carrying out chores despite their pain.

Chief Investigator Professor David Torgerson said: 'Back pain is an extremely common and costly condition.

'Exercise treatment, although widely used and recommended, has only a small effect on back pain.

'We therefore set out to investigate an alternative approach using a specially-developed weekly yoga programme for back pain sufferers to see if this allowed them to manage their back pain more successfully.'

Professor Alan Silman, Medical Director of Arthritis Research UK, which funded the study said: 'We're delighted that our trial has shown that yoga provides such positive benefits for people with chronic low back pain.

'This extremely common condition cannot be managed with painkillers alone and there is an urgent need to have non-drug therapies that sufferers can utilise in their own home.'

Around 80 per cent of Britons will suffer chronic lower back pain at some point in their lives.

Painkillers are often ineffective and many patients try alternative forms of therapy such as acupuncture, exercise or massages to relieve symptoms.

**REUTERS**

[http://s0.2mdn.net/viewad/817-grey.gif](http://ad.doubleclick.net/click;h=v8/3d8d/0/0/*/i;44306;0-0;0;46370787;31-1/1;0/0/0;u=id_131.251.254.75-4074557232.30244533:lv_1361189528963:ss_1361189528963:trid_00a96b33066a3224c47b4dd7785ef73d:p_ng;~okv=;type=ArticleSponsor;sz=1x1;articleID=UKTRE79U7DP20111031;taga=aaaaaaaaa;nseg=g;nseg=ukuswapv1;nseg=uschromeankurundefined;seg1=10493;seg1=10538;seg1=10272;~aopt=2/1/63/1;~sscs=?)**Yoga has small benefit for chronic back pain: study**

By Genevra Pittman

NEW YORK | Mon Oct 31, 2011 10:29pm GMT

In a new UK study of adults with chronic lower back pain, a 12-week yoga class led to a small improvement in how well participants could perform daily activities, but did not ease their pain.

The report follows another recent study from Washington State that found modest and similar benefits from yoga and stretching classes in people with chronic back pain.

gives us more confidence that the benefits seen with this class-based intervention seem to apply when it's done in different areas by different teachers," said Dr. Timothy Carey, from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, who has researched back pain but wasn't involved in either report.

The UK study, led by David Torgerson from the University of York, involved 313 adults who'd had chronic or recurring back pain for an average of 10 years.

They were randomly split into two groups -- one of which went to yoga classes once a week for 12 weeks, and the other that was only given a back pain information booklet.

The yoga classes included breathing and relaxation techniques as well as poses to improve strength and mobility.

People in that group were also given mats and encouraged to practice a couple of times a week at [homehttp://images.intellitxt.com/ast/adTypes/icon1.png](http://uk.reuters.com/article/2011/10/31/health-us-yoga-back-pain-idUKTRE79U7DP20111031).

Before and after the 12-week program, the participants filled out questionnaires on how much trouble they had with daily tasks, their pain and general health.

Average "disability" levels started out at 8 on a scale of 0 to 24 in both groups, with 24 representing the most difficulty with everyday activities.

By the end of the yoga classes, those scores had dropped more than 2 points, to between 5.5 and 6 among yoga participants, but didn't change in the non-yoga group.

A 2-point difference is something a patient would notice, Carey told Reuters Health, but "we're not talking cure here."

The improved functioning remained for the nine months that the researchers tracked participants after the trial ended.

However, there was no clear difference in back pain in the yoga group compared to people who were just given an educational booklet.

Both improved by an average of 1 to 4 points on a 100-point pain scale.

Researchers have wondered whether yoga might be a good option for people with chronic back pain because it rarely causes serious side effects and can be done relatively cheaply in group classes -- or individually for no money at all, once the techniques are learned.

"An advantage of yoga is that a lot of people practice yoga at home.

It seemed to be a therapy that not only could you be trained how to do it, you could continue after the (classes) had finished," Torgerson told Reuters Health.

He said that the researchers couldn't tell from the study whether it was only the stretching and exercise elements of yoga that made a difference for patients, as the Washington study suggested -- or whether some of its mind-body components were helpful as well.

Regardless, they wrote in their Annals of Internal Medicine report that a long-term yoga program might help maintain the improvements in back function seen in people who took the classes.

And they added that future research should measure the effects of yoga alongside other common treatments for chronic back pain, including spinal manipulation and talk therapy, to see how it stacks up in comparison.

A single yoga or stretching session may cost about $20, making it cheaper than the alternative treatments.

Carey said that general exercise and stretching -- whether it's done in a yoga class or not -- is helpful for most people with chronic back pain.

"The important thing about exercise is, you need to do a type of exercise that you enjoy and that you can work with in your schedule and your lifestyle," he said.

"It's important to kind of hang in there with the exercise, and I think that's where the classes may help," Carey added.

SOURCE: [bit.ly/atTzv0](http://bit.ly/atTzv0) Annals of Internal Medicine, online October 31, 2011.

The Express

November 1, 2011 Tuesday   
U.K. 1st Edition

**Cure back pain the yoga way**  
**SECTION:** NEWS; 03  
  
**LENGTH:** 124 words

YOGA could be the key to tackling crippling backache after researchers found the fitness craze provides effective pain relief.

Researchers at York University discovered a short course of yoga was far more effective in relieving chronic back pain than more conventional treatments, such as drugs.

The UK's largest-ever study into the benefits of yoga was funded by Arthritis Research UK.

Sufferers showed an average 30 per cent improvement after a 12-week programme of exercises to strengthen back and abdomen muscles.

Prof Alan Silman of Arthritis Research UK said: "This extremely common condition cannot be managed with painkillers alone."

Around 4.9 million working days are lost to back pain every year and costs the NHS GBP 1.5billion a year.

The Guardian (London) - Final Edition

November 1, 2011 Tuesday

**Yoga is best treatment for bad back**  
**BYLINE:** Nic Fleming  
  
**SECTION:** GUARDIAN HOME PAGES; Pg. 6  
  
**LENGTH:** 226 words

Yoga is more effective in helping people with lower back pain to become more mobile than the conventional treatments GPs offer.

A study found sufferers could perform everyday tasks like walking, bending down and dressing more easily if they did weekly yoga, and they reported enhanced function even nine months after the classes.

Smaller earlier studies have suggested benefits from yoga, but these were often with one teacher and without long-term follow-up.

Back pain is estimated to affect 80% of adults at some point; one in five people visit their GP in any given year due to it.

It is defined as chronic if it lasts more than six weeks, and is the second biggest cause of long-term disability after arthritis, and is second only to stress as a cause of absence from work.

It costs the NHS £1bn a year, and the economy an estimated £20bn a year.

Conventional treatment offers painkillers, spinal manipulation, acupuncture, and cognitive behavioural therapy.

"In the past, you were told to lie down until the pain passed," said Prof David Torgerson, of the University of York, who led the study published in the Annals of Internal Medicine.

"Now the advice is to keep your back active.

It seems yoga is more beneficial than other exercise, though we've not done a direct comparison.

We're still doing analysis, but yoga could cut costs for patients and NHS."

The Mirror

November 1, 2011 Tuesday   
3 Star Edition

**YOGA BEARABLE;   
EXERCISES 30% BETTER FOR BAD BACK THAN NHS CURES**  
**BYLINE:** LACHLAN MACKINNON  
  
**SECTION:** NEWS; Pg. 30  
  
**LENGTH:** 210 words

YOGA is better for chronic back ache than standard NHS treatments, experts claim.

It provides 30% more effective relief than care with exercise and painkillers, according to the largestever study into its benefits.

Eight in 10 Brits suffer back pain at some point, with an estimated 4.9 million working days lost.

The study, led by the University of York and funded by Arthritis Research UK, involved sufferers who were receiving GP care for chronic back pain.

A 156-strong group was offered group yoga classes specially designed to improve back function, while the second batch of 157 were offered GP care alone.

After three months, the yoga group were able to undertake 30% more activities compared with the standard care group.

There was also a reduction in pain.

Prof David Torgerson, of York University's health sciences department, said: "Back pain is an extremely common and costly condition.

Exercise treatment, although widely used and recommended, has only a small effect.

"Our results showed yoga can provide short and long-term benefits, without serious side-effects."

Prof Alan Silman, of Arthritis UK, said: "This condition cannot be managed with painkillers alone and there is an urgent need to have non-drug therapies that sufferers can use at home."

The Times (London)

November 1, 2011 Tuesday   
Edition 1;   
National Edition

**Got a pain in the back? Then try yoga instead of a trip to the doctor**  
**BYLINE:** Hannah Devlin  
  
**SECTION:** NEWS; Pg. 17  
  
**LENGTH:** 425 words

Yoga is more effective at alleviating lower back pain than conventional medical treatment, a trial has found.

After a 12-week course of yoga, patients with long-term back pain reported less discomfort, performed better physically and were more confident in performing everyday tasks than those offered conventional GP care.

While improvements were most pronounced at three months, immediately after the yoga course, people who were assigned to the yoga group still had less pain a year after the start of the study.

David Torgerson, director of the Trials Unit at the University of York, said: "Doctors should be able to suggest yoga classes as an approach that could help."

The study, published today in the journal Annals of Internal Medicine, assigned 156 patients to yoga classes and a control group of 157 patients to standard GP care.

Those in the control group received a range of interventions, including mild pain relief medication, physiotherapy and advice to remain active and avoid heavy lifting.

On average, members of the yoga group were able to undertake 30 per cent more activities compared with those in the usual care group after three months.

Lower back pain affects 80 per cent of the UK population at some point.

It is estimated that about 4.9 million working days a year are lost to it, but few effective, evidence-based treatments exist.

The yoga programme, which involved 20 experienced yoga teachers, was designed and delivered by Alison Trewhela, from Truro, Cornwall, an Iyengar Yoga teacher and Senior Practitioner in Yoga on the British Register of Complementary Practitioners.

The classes were designed for complete beginners, with yoga teachers given extra training in back care.

Participants were recruited from 39 general practices in seven Primary Care Trust areas, with classes held in non-NHS premises in Cornwall, North London, West London, Manchester and York.

Professor Alan Silman, medical director of Arthritis Research UK, said: "This trial is part of our larger commitment to seek self-help solutions to this common musculoskeletal problem.

There are compelling explanations why yoga may be helpful and this trial lends powerful support to the wider use of this approach."

Sue Faulkner, 68, from Bishopthorpe in York, who took part in the trial said that yoga had helped herto resume hobbies and a more active life.

"Walking around is no longer a problem and I can do my gardening now so long as I pace myself," she said.

"I've even taken on an allotment with my daughter and son-in-law and no longer take painkillers."