



***strength \* spirit \* solace***

## **Newsletter**

July 2006

Dear friend...

While we may not welcome all the changes that age brings, most of us do value the wisdom that comes from experience. If there's one thing that yoga teaches us, it's that a long-term, whole-person commitment to health and fitness is one of the most important priorities any of us can maintain.

Today's crop of older adults are like a pack of silver-haired dynamos in moisture-wicking athletic wear, doing shots of wheat grass, biking to the gym, and signing up for triathlons. The 50-plus crowd is redefining aging and making a passionate and unprecedented commitment to health and fitness. In fact, many activity-loving baby-boomers are rejecting traditional fun-in-the-sun beach holidays in favor of adventure vacations where they can white-water raft, kayak or attend fitness boot camps. These days, you're probably just as likely to meet a baby-boomer in a Bikram yoga class as you would at a bingo game.

Aging is no longer about accepting limitations and degeneration. It's about embracing life, taking up new pursuits, enjoying our health and fitness, and safeguarding them for an extended future. If you've already made that commitment, your future self — and your loved ones — will thank you. And if you haven't made it yet, know that it's never too late to start, or to start again.

Keep up the great work and let your light shine on!

Namasté,

*Sara*

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### **Meditation**

*Like us, the sea is ever-changing. And, like us, the earth's vast oceans appear at a distance to be stable and homogenous. But beneath the mask of solidity that both we and the sea wear, there lies unpredictability, sensitivity, and power. There is much we can learn from the ocean, representative as it is of our inner landscapes. The rough sounds of the sea's waves are*

*spiritually soothing, and its salt can purify our physical selves. Yet not everyone has the luxury of living by the shore or even visiting the coastlines where water and land meet. The ocean, however, exists in our conscious minds, put there by images we have seen and descriptions we have read. Wherever we are, we can access that mental image and use it as the starting point from which we can help to heal our emotions by meditating on the sea.*

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## **How to Get Started with Yoga**

You basically do not need anything to practice Yoga. The important thing is your attitude – practice with a big heart and a small ego. Some loose fitting clothes and a small secluded spot in your house will be enough for you to start with. Practicing with a mat, a blanket and a pillow is recommended. To get to know the basic yoga postures or “Asanas,” you can buy an introduction to yoga book or DVD. There are many yoga information resources available in the market as well as on the Internet. The best way to get started with yoga is to take a beginner yoga class at your local gym or yoga studio. Be sure the yoga teacher is aware that it is your first class, and alert him or her to any injuries or areas of pain in your body before you begin.

## **Where and What to Wear for Yoga**

One of the advantages of Yoga is that it can be practiced almost anywhere, without special equipment, and by people of all ages. In looking for a studio, choose a place that is relatively free from distractions, the place should be quiet, clean and well ventilated. Using a mat, a blanket, or towel will provide support and added comfort when you do lying or sitting positions. It's best to wear loose or stretch clothing, such as shorts, sweat clothes, or leotards. Yoga is traditionally practiced barefoot. It is also best to practice Yoga on an empty stomach or about one or two hours after a full meal. Be sure to empty your bladder. You may eat fruit, energy bar, drink a glass of juice or water an hour before class to avoid getting really hungry during practice.

## **When and How Long should you do Yoga**

Practicing first thing in the morning is an excellent way to revitalize the mind and body, while practicing yoga at night helps induce a deep, restful sleep. Like in regular exercise, you always start with easy poses to condition your body for the more difficult exercises that follows. Do not strain yourself. Pause when you feel pain or fatigue. Relaxing in between difficult exercises is also beneficial. Yoga sessions need not be lengthy, but should be done daily. As little as 15 minutes of exercises and 15 minutes of breathing and meditation each day can yield benefits.

## **Yoga Props**

As mentioned earlier, you basically do not need anything in order to practice yoga. All you need is the attitude – the desire to expand your self awareness. But this does not completely eliminate the need for the different yoga props. These props help you achieve the proper alignment, balance and make the pose a bit easier. The use of props also minimizes the strain and supports your muscles, thus allowing you to save your energy by exerting less effort on a pose. Yoga props help people with medical ailments and mature adults to cross their limitations. The props provide support, enabling them to do the poses that their ailments or old age prevent them from doing.

Here are some yoga props to start with:

- non-slip mat

- strap or belt
- cotton or wool blanket
- chair with arm rests
- wooden or foam block or a phone book

### **Basic Yoga Session**

A Basic Yoga Session need not take too long. A basic session usually follows this order:

- Warm-up Exercises – condition your body for safe transition into asana practice. For beginners, you may just use the warm-up poses as your entire practice. Warm-up exercises open the shoulder muscles, the spine, the hips, the lower back, and the groin.
- Standing Poses – for alignment of the feet and the body. Open the hips, stretch the legs, add strength to your back and increase your range of movement. Standing poses facilitate digestion, blood circulation and is good for those who want to lose weight.
- Sitting Poses – sitting poses allow you to infuse with the breath and prana, and to revitalize from a pose by giving you a calm and quiet feeling. These poses greatly contribute in shaping your buttocks and legs, and in adding vitality and suppleness to the spine.
- Twists – twist exercises release the tension in your spine, relieve backaches and make your shoulders more flexible. Twists also facilitate in the circulation of blood and nutrients in the body making it necessary for the health of the inter-vertebral discs.
- Supine and Prone Poses – these poses release tension in your abdomen and increase the mobility of your spine. They restore strength in your back, arms and legs, and release your hips and groins.
- Inverted and Balance Poses – inverted and balance poses defy gravity and develop coordination, increase stamina and strength, and improve grace, agility and poise. They also improve your concentration and focus since being quiet is necessary to be able to do these poses.
- Backbends – backbends are the poses that benefit the adrenal glands and the kidneys. Backbends release tension in the front body and in your shoulders and pelvic girdle, and improve the flexibility of your spine.
- Finishing Poses – these are the cooling-down exercises for Yoga.

### **Yoga Practices and Cautions**

When performing the asanas, try to concentrate on each movement – the process of moving is just as important as attaining any given position. Remember that you should not strain or continue holding any yoga posture if it causes pain. Yoga isn't a competitive sport, and the extent of the stretch is less important than the technique. Each asana may be repeated up to three times, but it is better to perform a posture once correctly than repeating it three times quickly and sloppily. Try to perform the poses in the prescribed order, since the routine is meant to help balance the different muscle groups. Your yoga practice will help to be more in touch with your body, able to recognize tension and relaxation and thus to bring them under your conscious control. At the end of session of asanas, you should spend at least ten minutes in final relaxation. During this time, you relax each part of the body in turn.

### **Nutrition – Eating healthy in our older years**

Over the last 100 years, the life expectancy of people living in the United States has increased substantially, from 47 years at the beginning of the 20th Century to over 70 years by the end of the 20th Century. Advances in medical care, an increase in the standard of living, and improved nutrition have all contributed to the greater life expectancy. Our obsession with youth has

spurred a huge amount of research about how to live a long healthy life. Although there are many factors, nutrition seems to be one of the most important. Most of the leading causes of death are closely associated with poor diet and/or alcohol consumption.

### **Physical Factors**

Unfortunately, aging is associated with a variety of physiologic changes that affect nutritional status.

#### **1. Deficiencies Abound**

As we age, we may experience a variety of physiologic changes affecting the mouth and gastrointestinal tract that negatively impact our desire to eat and/or our body's ability to absorb and assimilate nutrients. As a result, even healthy older people are at increased risk for certain nutrient deficiencies.

Many older people suffer from chronic constipation. Constipation may be caused by poor muscle tone in the digestive tract (a physiological change that is seen with aging), inadequate fluid intake and/or lack of physical activity. Often, people with constipation do not feel hungry and may skip several meals in a row. Such individuals are at risk for nutritional deficiencies.

#### **2. Medication Overload**

Statistics predict that the older we get, the greater our risk of developing certain diseases, including cancer, heart disease, obesity, osteoporosis, hypertension, and diabetes mellitus, all of which can affect our nutritional status. With the onset of such diseases, older people are treated with a host of prescription and over-the-counter medications, some of which contribute to poor absorption of nutrients and/or reduced appetite.

#### **3. Senses Decline**

Starting at about the age of 60, some people begin to lose their sense of taste and smell. Specifically, they lose the ability to distinguish between sweet, salty, sour, and bitter, which makes food less appealing and reduces appetite. Inadequate taste and smell sensations may also negatively impact the digestion of food, as the taste and smell of food stimulates the secretion of digestive enzymes in the mouth, stomach and pancreas.

#### **4. Immune Response Slows**

In the normal course of aging, many people also experience a decline in the function of the immune system, making them more susceptible to viral and bacterial infections. For an older person, catching the common cold or a flu bug can have devastating consequences, keeping them in bed for days, or resulting in a hospital stay. A nutrient-dense diet, and perhaps nutritional supplementation, is necessary to prevent chronic infections and to support immune system functioning.

#### **5. Instability Increases Risk**

Another consequence of aging is the gradual loss of muscle tissue throughout the body and the replacement of this tissue with fat. The loss of muscle tissue causes weakness and instability, and increases the chance that the older person will fall, causing a bone fracture or other injury. A healthy, well-balanced diet and regular exercise can help prevent the loss of muscle tissue.

### **Nutrient Needs**

As a rule, older people are at increased risk for nutrient deficiencies, and should ensure adequate intake of calcium, vitamin D, folic acid, vitamin E, vitamin C, vitamin B12, vitamin B6, magnesium, potassium, and fiber. Fortunately, all these nutrients – and many more – are well

supplied by a healthy, whole foods diet, characterized by a high intake of plant foods (legumes, vegetables, fruits, and whole grains), a moderate to high fish intake, a low intake of saturated fat and high intake of unsaturated fats (particularly olive oil), a low to moderate intake of dairy products (cheese and yogurt), a low intake of meat, and a reduced intake of alcohol (consuming one glass of red wine per day with meals is OK). Adhering to this diet increases longevity among older people, whether healthy or living with heart disease.

### **1. Caloric Intake and Balance of Nutrients**

The recommendations for calorie, protein, fat, and fiber intake for older individuals do not differ significantly from the recommendations for younger adults. Although it is true that calorie requirements decrease slightly with age due to loss of muscle tissue and reduced physical activity, many older people struggle to take in enough calories to meet their nutritional needs.

If you're over 60, it is not important to deliberately restrict calories unless you are severely overweight. And if you do restrict calories, take care to include a variety of foods to ensure that you take in enough protein, fiber, vitamins and minerals. Protein requirements are typically calculated based on body weight. For most people, protein intake of .8 - 1 gram of protein per kilogram of body weight (or approximately 70 grams of protein per day for a 150 pound person) is sufficient to maintain lean body mass and support the functions of the immune system.

Like all Americans, older people are encouraged to limit dietary fat intake to no more than 30% of total calories, to avoid saturated fats and hydrogenated fats, and to include good sources of omega-3 fats (flaxseeds, tuna and salmon) in their diet. Older individuals should consume a minimum of 25 grams of dietary fiber per day. If constipation is a problem, fiber intake should be increased by consuming more fiber-rich whole grains and vegetables.

### **2. Nutrients for Bones**

Osteoporosis, or porous bones, causes more than 1.5 million bone fractures each year. It is important, therefore, for older people to consume nutrients important for bone health, including calcium, vitamin D, and vitamin K. Calcium is important for maintaining the strength and density of bones. Inadequate intake of calcium in older individuals may lead to more rapid breakdown of bone, resulting in osteoporosis. Many older individuals may not absorb calcium because they lack stomach acid, which is necessary for calcium absorption.

The Adequate Intake level of calcium for men and women above the age of 70 is 1200 mg. Postmenopausal women who do not take hormone replacement therapy require additional calcium, and should strive to take in at least 1500 mg of calcium per day. Excellent food sources of calcium include bright leafy greens and dairy products. Vitamin D plays an important role in the absorption and utilization of calcium. As a result, vitamin D deficiency negatively impacts calcium status and bone health. The older generation may be at increased risk for vitamin D deficiency due to inadequate sun exposure and the decreased capacity of the kidneys to convert this vitamin to its active form. Milk, eggs, halibut, snapper, and shrimp are sources of vitamin D.

Vitamin K levels appear to decrease with age and because vitamin K is important for maintaining the strength of bones, older people should include foods containing vitamin K in their diet. Excellent food sources of this vitamin include spinach, Brussels sprouts, cauliflower, broccoli, chard, carrots, asparagus, and snow peas.

### **3. Antioxidants Protect the Heart**

To help prevent heart disease, age-related macular degeneration, cataracts, and cancer, older people may need additional antioxidant nutrients, including vitamin E, vitamin C and the

carotenoids, to protect their cells from free radical damage. Food sources of these nutrients include dark green leafy vegetables and a variety of fruits.

High dietary intake of folic acid, vitamin B6, and vitamin B12 is known to lower blood levels of homocysteine, a by-product of metabolism that can cause damage to artery walls, setting the stage for the development of atherosclerosis. A high blood homocysteine level (called hyperhomocysteinemia) is associated not only with increased risk of cardiovascular disease, but Alzheimer's disease; low intake of folic acid, vitamin B6 and vitamin B12 are key risk factors for hyperhomocysteinemia.

#### **4. Digestive Nutrients**

The incidence of type 2 diabetes mellitus increases with age. Although many dietary and lifestyle factors contribute to the development of diabetes, some scientists believe that a natural consequence of aging, regardless of diet and lifestyle, is a decreased ability of the body to metabolize blood sugar (called glucose) efficiently. As a result, older individuals may need additional chromium in their diet. Chromium facilitates the movement of glucose from the bloodstream into the cells, thereby lowering blood sugar levels. Food sources of chromium include brewer's yeast, oysters, liver, onions, whole grains, bran cereals, tomatoes, and potatoes

Older people may need to pay special attention to their intake of B vitamins because the production of hydrochloric acid (stomach acid) which is necessary for the absorption of vitamin B declines with age. Excellent sources of folic acid include spinach, parsley, broccoli, beets, turnip greens, asparagus, romaine lettuce, yeast, calf's liver, and lentils. Excellent sources of B6 include bell peppers, turnip greens, cauliflower, garlic, tuna, mustard greens, and kale. Excellent sources of B12 include calf's liver, snapper, salmon, shrimp, scallops, beef, lamb, and halibut.

Older individuals may require additional amounts of three more important minerals: zinc, magnesium, and potassium. Zinc absorption is impaired when secretion of stomach acid is not sufficient, and, as a result, zinc deficiency is fairly common among mature adults. Low intake of zinc is associated with decreased function of the immune system, loss of appetite, loss of taste, delayed wound healing, and development of pressure sores. Excellent food sources of zinc include calf's liver and mushrooms.

#### **5. Fluid Balance**

Certain diuretics, which are commonly prescribed for the treatment of high blood pressure, increase the excretion of magnesium and potassium, increasing the risk of developing a deficiency of these minerals. In addition, a diet high in sodium and low in potassium can negatively impact potassium status. Excellent sources of potassium include spinach, chard, mustard greens, zucchini, and button mushrooms. Excellent sources of magnesium include: chard, spinach, sea vegetables, basil, dill, and squashes. Adequate intake of fluids, most notably water, by older individuals is necessary to maintain health. Dehydration is common among mature adults, and may lead to uncomfortable physical problems including constipation and kidney stones. It is important to consume roughly one half your body weight in ounces per day to help keep your body well-hydrated.

### **Your Questions Answered!**

Do you have a question? Email it to me at [sara@saradelaney.com](mailto:sara@saradelaney.com).

Q: As I get older, my teeth seem less bright, less strong, and generally less healthy. What can I do to ensure my teeth stay in shape throughout my older years?

A:

Mounting evidence suggests that good dental habits not only help prevent cavities and give you a gleaming smile, they also help you live a longer, healthier life. Here's how you can make sure you're doing right by your teeth:

- **Brush after meals and floss** at least once a day. After brushing, rinse your gums with an alcohol-free mouthwash (to avoid the drying effect caused by alcohol, and to avoid killing off the good bacteria that helps keep the bad bacteria at bay). Eco-Dent and Tom's of Maine are natural options, or if you have sensitive gums, try a soothing rinse like Biotene. Consider an electric tooth cleaner if your dentist tells you brushing and flossing aren't controlling your plaque buildup.
- **Watch what you eat.** Limit your intake of refined sugar, sweetened soft drinks and processed foods; in their place, add more fruits and vegetables (preferably raw), whole grains, calcium, and vitamin C; eat foods that strengthen your jaw and promote circulation during chewing. Poor nutrition can make your mouth more susceptible to infections and make it tougher to fight them off.
- **Visit the dentist** at least once a year (more frequently as you get older). Regular cleanings reduce the buildup of plaque, which causes periodontal disease.
- **Get regular exercise** to improve digestion and blood flow to the gums.
- **Don't smoke.** Tobacco is a leading cause of dental infections, contributing to more than 50 percent of the cases of periodontal disease in U.S. adults.
- **If you're pregnant** or entering menopause, be aware that hormone changes can cause the gums to become red and tender and to bleed easily.
- **Reduce stress.** Excessive stress can make it more difficult for the body to fight off infections, including those that can lead to periodontal diseases.
- **Make sure your dentist** knows what drugs you're taking. Medications such as oral contraceptives, antidepressants and certain heart medications can affect oral health.
- **Be aware** that drug and alcohol abuse, may disrupt the balance of good and bad bacteria in your mouth.
- **Know your genetic makeup.** A family history of periodontal disease puts you at greater risk. Also, tell your dentist if you have a systemic disease that might interfere with your immune system or worsen the condition of the gums and supporting bone.
- **Talk to your doctor** about taking antibiotics before dental visits if you have a heart condition that might make you more susceptible to infection.

### **Contemplate...**

As we age, our muscles and tendons become less flexible. Before engaging in intense physical activity, warm up for at least 10 minutes by taking a brisk walk or light jog, then move your muscles and joints through a full range of motion. If you notice any troublesome twinges or tight spots, get them warmed and loosened before proceeding.



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*"When you come to the edge of all that you know, you must believe one of two things:  
There will be earth upon which to stand, or you will be given wings to fly."*

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