

MS Q&A's

1. Are there any exercises with Yoga that is more preferred for someone over 300 lbs? I ask because I find it hard to stick to all the different positions.

Starting with movements in a chair or on your back would be the most accessible. Keep in mind we don't have to do every pose. Try to focus first on breathing slowly and doing movements that feel accessible. For instance, begin with seated hamstring stretches, seated lunges and seated twists. Gradually, move this to standing versions of the same pose with hands supported on a stable chair that's pushed against a wall. layt.org has great resources to find a yoga therapist in your area.

2. What do you suggest if one arm goes all the way up and the other arm only goes up to the shoulder height?

If you can, use the opposite arm or assistance from someone, to gently lift the arm to slowly increase the range of motion on the side that's less cooperative. In times that isn't possible, bring both arms to shoulder height. Small steps each day go a very long way.

3. How often do you recommend practicing mindfulness exercises?

Practicing breathing and mindfulness daily will provide the most benefits. If possible, try for a few short practices per day. 5 minutes twice a day will go a long way.

4. How much exercise should an MS patient shoot for? I'm always told as much as possible but that is not very goal oriented.

Daily movement and breathing in small increments such as 10-15 minutes 1-2 times per day. It's all based on how you feel each day, but in general shorter practices will provide enough movement without overheating or over exerting.

5. What yoga positions can I do to relieve muscle spasms and muscle cramps?

Poses that stretch the calves and hamstrings can bring relief. These movements can be done on your back, in a chair or standing with support. Integrating a strap or towel for additional length and traction can be helpful. Keeping the body moving in general with gentle movements like bicycling the legs on your back will improve circulation. When your legs need a rest, lay on your back with your legs elevated with several pillows or rest them on a chair.

6. Best ideas for yoga within a limited space?

Use what you have in your home. Chairs, walls, countertops, pillows, blankets and towels. Use can lie on your bed or floor for movements on your back. Seated in a chair or standing next to a chair or wall will provide a lot of traction for the spine and legs. Small movements go a very long way. Practice breathing anywhere you can.

7. Are there any tips for people who are newly diagnosed with MS and new to yoga?

Yes, start slowly and focus on breathing in and out through the nose. Expand your belly, ribs and chest as you inhale. Release and soften belly, ribs and chest as you exhale. Do movements that feel good in the moment. Small steps can go a very long way. Move slowly and with intention to understand how your body is responding to the breathing and movements. There's at least 3 or 4 ways to do a pose or to receive the same benefits. layt.org is a great resource to find a yoga therapist near you.

8. Will yoga help strengthen my legs?

Yes, standing poses are great for building strength. You can do any of the poses with hands on a wall, top of chair or countertop. Make sure you feel stable and supported.

9. How do you compare chair yoga with standing yoga?

Seated in a chair provides support and helps build our strength. There are so many ways to use a chair to gain flexibility, balance and strength. You can do any of the movements seated or standing with the chair. The chair allows us to create more traction in the spine and legs.

10. Will doing yoga give me energy and better body movement?

Yes, there are certain breathing techniques and movements that can increase your energy. Longer inhales and movements that open your back and chest can increase energy. Restorative poses such as laying with legs supported by blankets, or a chair can replenish our energy. Movement in general increases our circulation, digestive system and cardiovascular system. Yoga will provide ways to learn how to improve posture and develop insight into how we move and hold our body in space.

11. Are there any adaptive yoga programs for Senior Citizens?

Yes. Visit iyt.org to find Yoga Therapists that have senior programs. There are so many wonderful ways to adapt yoga to each person's needs.

12. Are there yoga exercises that can be practiced in the pool?

Absolutely, check out www.christafairbrother.com for an aqua yoga program.

13. Are there yoga positions for people with MS who also have severe balance problems and major lower back problems?

Yes, the chair is a great way to improve your balance and feel supported. You can do movements seated or standing with a chair or wall. For lower back issues, it depends on the issue. Forward bending movements (flexion) can be aggravating to sciatica, strained back muscles, bulging or herniated discs. Back bending movements (Extension/opening back and chest) can aggravate stenosis. Keeping a neutral spine is the safest position. Slowly add movements only if they feel good. Please reach out for additional guidance Info@kimberlycastelloyoga.com and I can provide specific movements.

14. Can you combine yoga with pilates?

Yes, yoga will be more focused on breathing, mindfulness, flexibility, strength and balance. Pilates is more focused on strength. They can be good compliments.

15. I also suffer from Spinal Stenosis. Can yoga help with that?

Yes, absolutely. It can assist with strengthening your spine, abdominals and legs. It also increases your flexibility. Focus on length in your spine by using a wall or chair to create traction, core strengthening and hip openers. Back bending movements are contraindicated. iayt.org can provide a list of yoga therapists in your area. Look for someone who specializes in spinal issues and MS. I do both, so feel free to reach out at info@kimberlycastelloyoga.com for guidance.

16. Are there chairs that you can recommend for yoga?

I use a metal folding chair, but any stable chair will do.

17. Are there yoga exercises for people who are bed bound?

Yes, there are a lot of movements that can be done in a bed. Please visit iayt.org to find a Yoga Therapist near you. Feel free to reach out for additional support at info@kimberlycastelloyoga.com. I can help find someone in your area as well.

18. Where can I find information on yoga near me?

Visit iayt.org to find a Yoga Therapist in your area.

19. How can I modify certain positions as I've had both knee and hip replaced? I find my feet always burn during yoga stances.

My first thoughts would be how long has it been post knee and hip replacements? Did you have physical therapy after each surgery and did your doctor give the ok to return to exercise programs? Is there any known neuropathy? I would start by finding a comfortable and stable range of motion for any lunge positions. Focus on using your quads. Ensure that the knee is stacked over your ankle to provide support. Keeping feet hip width apart and joint stacked (hips over knees, knees over ankles) in standing and seated (chair) postures will provide the most stability. Movements on the back are also a great way to take pressure off the knees and hips.