

Viniyoga for Low Back Pain

Yoga Benefits for Low Back Pain

Viniyoga-trained Yoga Therapists and teachers trained in therapeutic low back pain interventions apply the tools of yoga to reduce or prevent low back pain by:

- **Improving strength and flexibility** in the muscles that support the spine, sacrum and hips
- Creating **healthier patterns of movement**
- **Improving posture**
- Utilizing **specialized techniques of breathing** for core strength and axial extension.

Viniyoga therapy methods for low back pain can be used individually and in therapeutic groups. Viniyoga methodology for low back pain includes:

- **Breath-centric asana** (yoga postures)
- A combination of **repetition** in and out of postures and **stay** in postures
- **Specific sequencing** of postures
- **Adaptation of the classical form of postures** to address the practitioner's unique condition.

Evidence-Based Practice for Yoga and Low Back Pain

- Yoga, specifically a Viniyoga therapy-based low back pain intervention, demonstrated effectiveness equal to an exercise-based program for chronic low back pain in a large National Institutes of Health study. Karen Sherman's first randomized clinical trial (RCT) was met by high enthusiasm among health care providers and the yoga community.

Study article

Sherman, KJ, Cherkin, DC, Erro, J, Miglioretti, DL, Deyo, RA. (2005). Comparing yoga, exercise and a self-care book for chronic low back pain: A randomized, controlled trial. *Annals of Internal Medicine*, 143:849-856.

- In October, 2011, the initial results of Sherman's second, larger scale study were released. This study compared a twelve week Viniyoga intervention, a physical therapist designed stretching intervention of similar intensity and duration and a self-care booklet.

Methodology article

Sherman, K., Cherkin, D., et al (2010) Comparison of Yoga versus Stretching for Chronic Low Back Pain: Protocol for the Yoga Exercise Self-care (YES) Trial. *Trials*. 2010 Mar 31;11:36. Free article available at <http://www.ncbi.nlm.gov.proxy1.cl.msu.edu/pubmed/20356395>

Study article

Sherman, K., Cherkin, D., et al (2011) A Randomized Trial Comparing Yoga, Stretching, and a Self-care Book for Chronic Low Back Pain. *Archives of Internal Medicine*. Published online October 24, 2011. [doi:10.1001/archinternmed.2011.524](https://doi.org/10.1001/archinternmed.2011.524)

- The Viniyoga low back pain intervention was developed by Gary Kraftsow, founder of the American Viniyoga Institute and Robin Rothenberg, Certified Viniyoga Teacher/Yoga Therapist. It was a 12-week intervention, offered 1X/week for 90 minutes.

Viniyoga Methodology for Low Back Pain

Evidence-Based Practice for Yoga and Low Back Pain (Continued)

Findings

- The yoga intervention group had higher attendance in weekly classes, engaged in more home practice, and were more likely to recommend the class to others than the exercise group.
- The yoga and stretching groups had superior function in back-related dysfunction (RDQ score) at weeks 12 and 26 than the self-care group.
- Compared to self-care, yoga and stretching group participants were significantly more likely to rate their back pain as better, much better or completely gone at follow-up.
- More participants in the yoga and stretching groups were very satisfied with their overall care for low back pain compared to those who received a self-care booklet.

Recommended Resources – Yoga and Low Back Pain

- *The Essential Low Back Program: Relieve Pain & Restore Health* by Robin Rothenberg. Booklet and 5 audio CDs. <http://www.essentialyogatherapy.com/> \$49.95 plus shipping and handling.
- *Viniyoga Therapy for Low Back, Sacrum, and Hips* with Gary Kraftsow. 3 short practices and lecture on DVD. \$24.95 plus shipping & handling from www.pranamaya.com
- *Viniyoga Therapy for the Upper Back, Neck and Shoulders* with Gary Kraftsow. 3 short practices and lecture on DVD. \$24.95 plus shipping & handling from www.pranamaya.com

For More Information

Jay Coldwell, Studio Manager, 5 Koshas Yoga & Wellness, jay@5koshasyoga.com. 5 Koshas Yoga & Wellness offers ongoing Viniyoga wellness and therapeutic groups as well as individualized yoga instruction and Yoga Therapy.

Andrew Beaumont, MD, PhD, is a neurosurgeon specializing in diseases of the spine, with a research background in Physiology. On a personal level he has a deep interest in Yoga, Ayurveda and other traditional medicine systems. He has academic interest in understanding the modern physiology and science behind ancient wellness and healing modalities, including breathing, sound, and meditation. Contact Andrew at info@5koshasyoga.com to discuss any possible academic or study collaborations.

Mary Hilliker, RDN, E-RYT 500, CYT, develops, facilitates and mentors advanced level yoga teachers in Viniyoga therapeutic group classes such as *Yoga Therapeutics: Back, Hips and Knees* and *Yoga Therapeutics: Back, Neck and Shoulders*. She provides individualized Yoga Therapy and yoga teacher training in the Viniyoga tradition. Mary is a training coordinator for the American Viniyoga Institute (AVI)'s Viniyoga Therapist and 200 hr. Viniyoga Wellness Instructor Trainings. She is available to discuss Viniyoga therapy for chronic low back pain intervention options for health care and corporate settings. Contact Mary at mary@5koshasyoga.com or 715.218.7120.



5 Koshas
yoga and wellness