



Care first

Is Yoga a Proper Workout?

Find out how yoga can benefit your physical fitness...

Yoga is great for relaxation and flexibility but if you think that's all you're going to get from a class, you're in for a rude awakening.

If you look at the basic elements of fitness – cardio, strength, flexibility, balance – it's fair to say that there are very few exercise disciplines that cover them all.

Yoga it isn't going to work your heart and lungs in the sense that running, swimming or cycling does but in every other aspect it gets close to being the perfect workout.

Go into any class and watch the beads of perspiration forming on faces and you will realise that, far from being a cushy little relaxation number, yoga isn't for the faint hearted. Still not convinced?

Plank

Okay, let's take a basic yoga pose like the plank. This is a simple exercise that looks just like the start of a press up:

- Facing down, draw the torso forward until the shoulders are over the wrists and the whole body is in one straight line. This is very similar to the position you would take if you were about to do a push up.
- Press the forearms and hands firmly down, do not let your chest sink, press back through the heels.
- Keep the neck in line with the spine and broaden the shoulder blades.

Try holding this pose for thirty seconds or so. Now try lifting one leg at a time.

How long did it take before your whole body was shaking?

The plank is just one of numerous yoga exercises that are great for developing core strength and that benefit every other muscle group as well.

Imagine putting the plank into an hour or so of other poses (asanas) - now tell us that you don't get a proper workout from yoga!

Add in the calming effect that yoga breathing (pranayama) induces and it's hard to think of an exercise discipline that gives you more.

Find out about yoga classes near you and give it a go!

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