An Om a Day
Can Yoga Help Your Health?

Breathe deeply. Stretch gently. New research finds that not only does yoga quiet the mind, it may even soothe stress deep down in your cells.

Researchers asked people with type 2 diabetes to do yoga for three months, and then checked their blood for signs of oxidative stress. This type of cell damage is the root cause of insulin resistance, diabetes, and complications like neuropathy.

The results, published in the journal Diabetes Care, showed people who did yoga had less oxidative stress than study participants who didn’t practice it. As a result, they also lost weight and had better blood glucose control.

Yoga shouldn’t replace medical care or aerobic exercise, such as cycling or swimming, which leads to bigger improvements in glucose control. But when used with standard care, it may be able to help you maintain control of your disease. To get started:

➤ Talk with your doctor about whether yoga is safe for you.
➤ Seek out a qualified instructor. Ask about training and credentials.
➤ Start by learning the basics. Ask questions if you don’t understand a pose.
Can Diabetes Impact How Long I Live?

Diabetes can take quite a toll on people’s lives. But just how great could that toll be? A study in the *Archives of Internal Medicine* found that diabetes can take up to eight years off a person’s life. Why? People with diabetes are at increased risk for cardiovascular disease (CVD). They’re also more likely to develop CVD at a younger age, and that can trim years off their lives. Researchers found that women with diabetes developed CVD 8.4 years sooner than women without diabetes. And as a result, women ages 50 and older with diabetes lived 8.2 years fewer than women without diabetes. The researchers concluded that eating right and getting exercise may help prevent and control diabetes. It may also lower the risk for CVD. And that may ultimately lead to a longer life.

Understanding the Dilated Retinal Exam

People with diabetes are more likely to experience eye problems than those without the condition. A dilated retinal eye exam can help detect a problem in the eye. Some of these problems include glaucoma, cataracts, and retinopathy. If a problem is found, treatment may be recommended to help prevent it from getting worse. In this type of eye exam, drops are placed in your eyes to widen (dilate) the pupils. This makes it easier for your eye doctor to see inside your eye. He or she will use a special lens to examine the retina and optic nerve on the inside back wall of each eye for damage and other problems. It’s possible that your vision may remain blurry and that light bothers you for a few hours after the exam. Ask a friend or family member to drive you home.

Although these are suggested guidelines for care, please check with your benefits plan for coverage.
Swap Your Drink To Control Your Diabetes

It’s like a diet ad you’d see in the back of a magazine: Lose weight, feel better, and control your diabetes, all without changing the food you eat.

The secret? Cut out sugary sodas, fruit juices, and sports drinks. Instead, sip water, unsweetened tea, diet soda, or other beverages with few or no calories.

The Harms of Sugary Sips
On any given day, about half of Americans drink at least one sugar-sweetened beverage. Besides soda, added sugars lurk in many other cans and cups, including:
› Sports drinks
› Energy drinks
› Vitamin-type waters
› Flavored coffee drinks
› Juices with sugar added

Regular soft drinks are the number one source of added sugars in Americans’ diets, according to the American Heart Association. Experts there recommend men and women without diabetes limit the amount of added sugars to no more than half their daily discretionary calories. For most men, this means consuming no more than nine teaspoons of sugar per day and, for most women, no more than six. But each 12-ounce can of soda contains eight teaspoons of sugar.

Drinking sugar seems to lead to weight gain faster than eating it. That could be because liquid calories don’t fill you up like calories from solid foods. What’s more, sugary beverages have been linked to developing type 2 diabetes if you don’t already have it. They also make it harder to control your blood glucose if you do have type 1 or type 2 diabetes.

Ways to Wet Your Whistle
Water is the simplest alternative to sugary drinks. But you can also try the following:
› Squeeze a lime or lemon into your water to add flavor.
› Sip tea or coffee without sweeteners, or with artificial sweeteners. One type, sorbitol, is absorbed more slowly than sugar and has about half the calories.
› Buy low-calorie drinks or drink mixes.
› Drink fruit juice with no sugar added—it will say “100 percent juice” on the label. You’ll still need to limit your portion to 4 to 6 ounces per day. Better yet, eat whole fruit. It hydrates you and also contains more nutrients and fiber to fill you up.

Browse recipes for low-sugar beverages—such as pineapple cooler—at http://tracker.diabetes.org/recipe.
Safe Driving with Diabetes
Your Green-Light Guide

There’s a reason that first driver’s license is a milestone for most American teenagers. Getting behind the wheel gives you freedom and independence. It’s often the way you get to school, work, and other important places.

In most cases, diabetes won’t stand between you and your car keys. However, you will need to take extra precautions to prevent episodes of low blood glucose on the road.

Caution: Low Blood Glucose Ahead
Low blood glucose, or hypoglycemia, occurs when your blood glucose drops below the normal levels. It can happen to anyone. But it’s most frequent in people with diabetes. And it is more common if you’re taking insulin or other medicines. The condition can strike suddenly. If you’re behind the wheel, you risk:

❯ Having trouble concentrating
❯ Vision problems
❯ Slower reaction speeds
❯ Loss of consciousness

In fact, some experts say driving with low blood glucose is similar to driving drunk. Fatal accidents have occurred because people with diabetes experienced an episode of hypoglycemia in the driver’s seat.

DID YOU KNOW?
Some states have special rules about getting a driver’s license if you have diabetes.

Carry Roadside Assistance
The dangers of driving with low blood glucose are real. But, there is much you can do to prevent them. Talk with your doctor about developing an action plan that is right for you. Such a plan might include testing your blood glucose every single time before you drive. If it is below 70 mg/dl, eat one of these fast-acting sources of sugar. Each contains about 15 grams of carbohydrates:

❯ Five or six pieces of hard candy
❯ Three or four glucose tablets
❯ 1/2 cup of nondiet soda or fruit juice
❯ One serving of glucose gel
❯ 1 tablespoon of sugar or honey

Test your blood glucose again in 15 minutes. Repeat—and don’t get in the car—until your readings are 70 mg/dl or higher. Keep your car stocked with sugar sources, such as these above, at all times. Taking a longer trip? Check your blood glucose at regular intervals. Also, pull over and check it immediately if you experience any signs of hypoglycemia. These include shakiness, weakness, sweating, or confusion.

If your teen has diabetes, go over these steps as part of driver’s education. Make sure he or she knows it’s never OK to drive with low blood glucose.

STOP Diabetes Red Lights
For a few people with diabetes, driving can become too dangerous. This includes people with hypoglycemia...
unawareness. People with this condition can no longer feel the symptoms of low blood glucose. Talk with your doctor if you experience these types of episodes.

Some complications of diabetes, including eye disease and nerve damage, can also make driving difficult. Get a complete eye examination every year. See your doctor regularly to keep your diabetes in control and prevent and detect complications.

If you and your doctor decide it’s unsafe for you to drive, don’t fret. You can find other ways to get around. Try public transportation or carpooling with a friend.

Right of Way
Some states have special rules about getting a driver’s license if you have diabetes. You may need to have a special medical exam or take other tests. You may also have to answer questions about your condition.

Create Your Sick-Day Plan

Getting a cold or other routine illness isn’t usually part of anyone’s plan. But when you have diabetes, it can be more than just an inconvenience.

When you’re ill, your body releases a surge of disease-fighting hormones. These compounds also raise your blood glucose and interfere with the effects of insulin. In severe cases, they can cause ketoacidosis, a condition that may leave you in a coma.

The best time to cope with minor health troubles is when you’re feeling fine. Work with your diabetes care team to develop a sick-day plan, recommends the American Diabetes Association. Decide together how much insulin to take, and ask how often to check the following when you’re ill:

❯ Weight
❯ Blood glucose level
❯ Temperature
❯ Ketones

Your doctor can tell you what readings mean your diabetes is out of control or that you’re at risk for ketoacidosis.

List the phone numbers for your doctor and other members of your diabetes care team. You don’t have to call each time you have a sniffle or sore throat. Pick up the phone if you have:

❯ Lost 5 pounds or more
❯ A temperature of 101 degrees or higher
❯ Vomiting or diarrhea lasting longer than six hours
❯ Moderate to large amounts of ketones in your urine
❯ Blood glucose levels lower than 60 mg/dl or above 300 mg/dl
❯ Trouble breathing
While oral health is connected to overall health for everyone, people with diabetes should pay extra attention to their dental well-being. They are at higher risk for tooth loss, gum disease, and other mouth troubles.

Watch for Signs of Dental Problems
To prevent gum disease and other dental problems, visit your dentist every six months. Make sure he or she knows you have diabetes. Also, tell your dentist or hygienist right away if you have any of the following symptoms:

- Trouble chewing or a different feeling in your bite
- Bad breath
- Loose or sensitive teeth
- Gums that bleed when you brush or floss
- White patches or a bad taste in your mouth
- Ill-fitting dentures
- Mouth dryness or soreness
- Gums that pull away, making your teeth look long

Healthy Mouths, Healthy Bodies
Dental visits are key, but it’s also important to guard your oral health between appointments. To do so:

- Brush your teeth after every meal, after every snack, and before you go to sleep.
- Floss at least twice daily. Flossing removes plaque between your teeth.
- If you smoke, quit. Smoking makes gum disease worse. Ask your dentist or doctor for help if needed.
- Control your blood glucose. Since most tooth and gum problems start with excess blood glucose, managing your disease helps keep your mouth healthy, too.

The association between dental and diabetes health works both ways. Treating gum disease and other oral health issues may actually improve blood glucose levels, thereby preventing other diabetes complications. So a healthy smile could truly be a sign of picture-perfect health.
Magnesium is a mineral that helps your muscles flex and your body build protein. And it may also help control your blood glucose if you have diabetes.

**Better Glucose Control**
In a new study, people with type 2 diabetes who got less magnesium had higher fasting glucose levels. This means their blood glucose wasn’t well-controlled. The findings were reported in the journal *Clinical Nutrition*. Scientists think the problem is related to the kidneys.

The kidneys are bean-shaped organs that police the balance of magnesium in the body. When healthy people have low magnesium, the kidneys limit how much is removed through urine. But kidney damage related to diabetes interferes with this important task.

Previous research shows people who get enough magnesium may have a lower risk for diabetes. People with low magnesium are six to seven times more likely to get metabolic syndrome. This condition increases the risk for heart disease and diabetes.

**Mix Magnesium into Your Diet**
Early warning signs of low magnesium include weakness, fatigue, loss of appetite, nausea, and vomiting. If you’re concerned about your magnesium levels, talk with your doctor. He or she may test your blood and recommend supplements if needed.

Magnesium from foods seems best to aid in preventing diabetes. The government recommends these daily values of magnesium:
- Men ages 19 to 30: 400 mg
- Men older than 30: 420 mg
- Women ages 19 to 30: 310 mg
- Women older than 30: 320 mg

Want to boost your intake? Try:
- Halibut, 90 mg in 3 ounces
- Cooked frozen spinach, 75 mg in 1/2 cup
- Cooked kidney or pinto beans, 35 mg in 1/2 cup

*Looking for more options? Find more magnesium-rich foods at [http://ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets](http://ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets) and type "magnesium" in the search field at the top.*

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**Lentils and Rice**
*Serves 4*

**Ingredients**
- 1 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 large onions, peeled and sliced (about 4 cups)
- 4 cups low-sodium chicken or vegetable broth
- 1 cup lentils, dry, washed
- ½ cup long-grain white rice
- ¼ tsp. salt
- ¼ tsp. pepper
- 2 tbsp. chopped cilantro

**Directions**
1. Heat the broth in a saucepan. Add the lentils and simmer 20 minutes.
2. While the lentils are cooking, heat the oil in a large, high-sided skillet on medium-high heat. Sauté the onions until golden brown.
3. Take half the onions out of the pan and set aside. Add the remaining onions, rice, salt, and pepper to the simmering lentils. Cover and bring to a boil.
4. Reduce the heat, and cook very slowly about 20 minutes, or until the lentils and rice are tender.
5. Serve in a bowl topped with the reserved onions and chopped cilantro.

**Serving size:** 1 cup
**Each serving provides:**
- 286 calories, total fat 4 g, 1 g saturated fat, 49 g carbohydrates, 208 mg sodium, 10 g fiber
TROUBLED TUMMY?
Take Back Control

One in five Americans has irritable bowel syndrome, or IBS. The unpleasant list of symptoms includes bloating, gas, cramping, diarrhea, and constipation. Regain command with these tips.

1. SOOTHE STRESS
   Stress can bring on IBS. Write down how it affects your IBS. Discuss it with your doctor. This will help your doctor to know how to treat the symptoms.

2. TRY PROBIOTICS
   These are “good” bacteria found in supplements and yogurt. They may help to ease IBS symptoms. Your doctor can help you choose the right ones.

3. CHANGE YOUR DIET
   Eat a variety of healthy, high-fiber foods, including whole grains, fruits, and vegetables. Avoid gas-forming foods, like cabbage and broccoli.

Your doctor might offer other solutions, such as medicine, if IBS is interfering with the things you want to do in your life.