

The Role of Yoga in Promoting Healthy Lifestyle and Preventive Health

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Abstract

Healthy lifestyle behaviour and preventive health are important for reducing the burden of chronic disease and supporting physical and mental well-being. Yoga is a mind-body practice that commonly combines physical postures, breathing, relaxation, meditation, and mindful attention. This paper examines the role of yoga in promoting healthy lifestyle and preventive health, focusing on physical activity, healthy eating, weight management, stress reduction, sleep, mental well-being, healthy ageing, noncommunicable disease prevention, and sustained health behaviour. Contemporary evidence suggests that yoga may support stress management, sleep, balance, healthy activity and eating habits, and some aspects of weight control. NCCIH notes that participation in yoga programs has been associated with healthier eating and physical-activity habits, although some observational findings cannot establish causation. WHO also identifies yoga as a useful way to encourage regular physical activity and has highlighted its potential contribution to healthy ageing and prevention of noncommunicable diseases. paper argues that yoga can be a valuable complementary lifestyle practice, but it should form part of a broader preventive-health strategy rather than replace established medical screening, vaccination, treatment, or public-health measures.

Keywords

Yoga; Healthy Lifestyle; Preventive Health; Physical Activity; Wellness; Noncommunicable Diseases; Healthy Eating; Stress Management; Health Promotion

Introduction

Preventive health focuses on reducing health risks, promoting healthy behaviour, identifying disease early, and maintaining well-being across the life course. Lifestyle factors such as physical inactivity, unhealthy diet, insufficient sleep, chronic stress, and tobacco use can contribute to poor health outcomes.

Yoga has become a widely practiced mind-body activity that can combine physical movement, breathing, relaxation, and mindfulness. WHO has described yoga as a valuable tool for encouraging regular physical activity and has highlighted its potential role in healthy ageing, mobility, mental well-being, and independence.

□cite□turn0search0□turn0search2□

NCCIH summarizes evidence suggesting that yoga may support stress management, mental and emotional health, sleep, balance, healthy eating and activity habits, and weight control. [cite\turn0search1] These findings make yoga relevant to contemporary health-promotion strategies.

However, preventive health involves more than individual lifestyle practices. Vaccination, screening, early diagnosis, appropriate treatment, public-health policy, and social determinants of health remain essential. Yoga should therefore be considered a complementary component of prevention.

This paper examines nine dimensions of yoga and preventive health: physical activity, healthy habits, nutrition, weight management, stress, sleep, mental well-being, healthy ageing, and noncommunicable disease prevention.

1. Yoga as a Form of Regular Physical Activity

Regular physical activity is a major component of healthy living. Yoga can provide movement, stretching, balance work, and muscle engagement, with intensity varying substantially between styles and practices. WHO recommends regular physical activity for adults and notes that physical activity supports cardiovascular, metabolic, mental, cognitive, sleep, and general health outcomes. Yoga is among the forms of physical activity that can contribute to these benefits. [cite\turn0search4] Yoga can therefore help people incorporate movement into daily routines, particularly when practiced consistently and adapted to individual abilities.

2. Yoga and Healthy Lifestyle Habits

Healthy lifestyle management includes physical activity, nutritious eating, adequate sleep, stress management, and avoidance of harmful behaviours. Yoga may influence several of these behaviours through increased self-awareness and routine. NCCIH reports that studies have associated regular yoga participation with healthier eating and physical-activity habits. Some participants have also reported reducing unhealthy foods and increasing fruit and vegetable intake and activity levels. [cite\turn0search1] These findings are encouraging, although not every study can establish that yoga itself caused the lifestyle changes.

3. Yoga, Mindful Eating, and Nutrition

Yoga may encourage greater awareness of bodily sensations, hunger, eating patterns, and food choices. This can support mindful eating and more deliberate dietary behaviour. Research summarized by NCCIH suggests that yoga participation can be associated with healthier eating habits, including greater fruit and vegetable intake in some populations. [cite\turn0search1] Yoga should not be treated as a substitute for professional nutritional advice. A healthy diet should remain nutritionally adequate and consistent with individual needs and established dietary guidance.

4. Yoga and Weight Management

Maintaining a healthy body weight is influenced by diet, physical activity, sleep, stress, genetics, environment, and other factors. Yoga can contribute to physical activity and may support behavioural changes relevant to weight management. NCCIH reports that a 2022 review of 22 studies involving 1,178 participants with overweight or obesity found reductions in body weight, BMI, body fat, and waist size in yoga interventions. □cite□turn0search1□ Weight management should nevertheless be approached comprehensively, without presenting yoga as a stand-alone solution.

5. Yoga for Stress Prevention and Management

Chronic stress can influence sleep, eating behaviour, mood, physical activity, and general health. Yoga's combination of movement, breathing, relaxation, and focused attention may provide a practical strategy for managing everyday stress. NCCIH reports beneficial effects on perceived stress across a number of studies, although the quality and design of evidence vary. □cite□turn0search1□ Reducing chronic stress may indirectly support preventive health by making healthy routines easier to maintain. Severe or persistent psychological symptoms require appropriate professional care.

6. Yoga, Sleep, and Recovery

Adequate sleep is an important part of preventive health. Poor sleep can affect mood, concentration, metabolic health, appetite, and daily functioning. Research summarized by NCCIH indicates that yoga may improve sleep in several populations, including older adults and some people with health conditions. □cite□turn0search1□ A regular yoga routine, particularly when combined with relaxation, may support recovery and healthier daily rhythms. Persistent sleep problems should still be clinically evaluated when necessary.

7. Yoga and Mental Well-Being

Preventive health includes maintaining psychological well-being as well as physical health. Yoga may support resilience, stress regulation, emotional balance, and general mental well-being. NCCIH reports evidence of benefits for some positive mental-health outcomes, while WHO has also highlighted yoga's contribution to stress relief and emotional balance. □cite□turn0search0□turn0search1□ Yoga should complement, rather than replace, evidence-based psychological or medical treatment for diagnosed mental-health conditions.

8. Yoga, Healthy Ageing, and Functional Independence

Healthy ageing involves maintaining mobility, strength, balance, mental well-being, and independence. Yoga can be adapted to different ages and physical abilities, including gentler and chair-based approaches. WHO's 2026 healthy-ageing focus highlights yoga's potential contribution to balance, flexibility, strength, mobility, and independence across the life course. □cite□turn0search0□turn0search3□ Safe adaptation and qualified

instruction are particularly important for older adults and people with balance limitations or existing health conditions.

9. Yoga and Prevention of Noncommunicable Diseases

Noncommunicable diseases such as cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes are strongly influenced by lifestyle and other risk factors. Physical activity is an important preventive measure, and yoga can contribute to regular movement and stress management. WHO has described yoga as a useful tool for increasing physical activity and supporting prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases. Evidence for yoga-specific prevention of particular diseases is more variable, so claims should remain proportionate to the available research. A comprehensive preventive-health strategy should combine physical activity with healthy nutrition, tobacco avoidance, appropriate screening, vaccination, sleep, and timely medical care.

Illustration

The following illustration presents yoga as a complementary component of a healthy lifestyle, connecting physical activity, healthy habits, stress management, and preventive health.

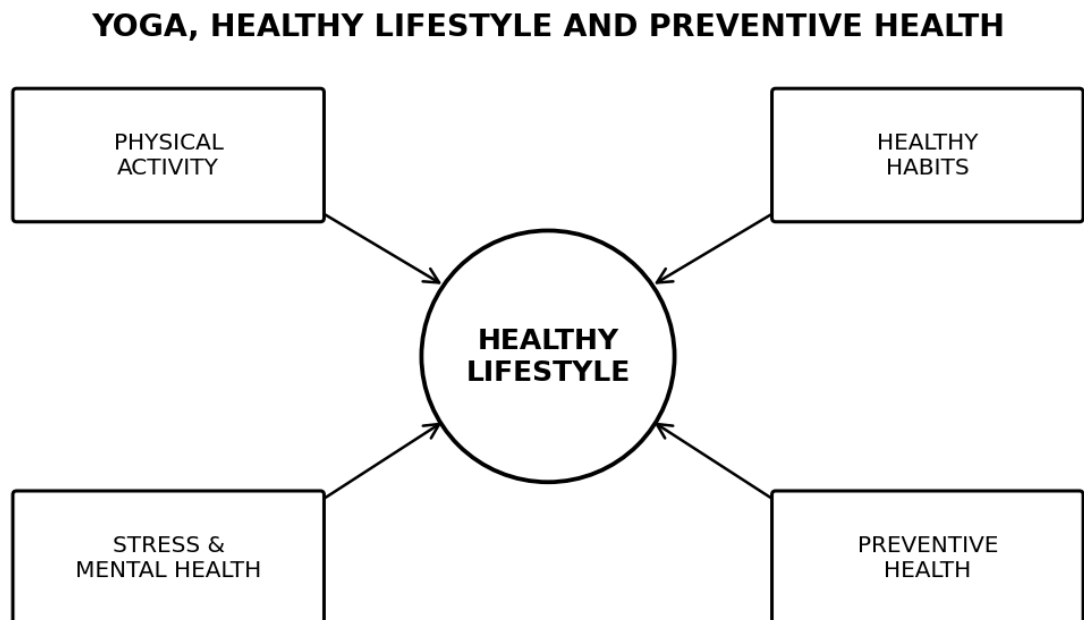


Figure 1. Yoga, healthy lifestyle and preventive health.

Conclusion

Yoga can contribute to healthy lifestyle and preventive health by encouraging regular physical activity, stress management, mindful habits, sleep, balance, and awareness of everyday health behaviours. Its flexible format makes it accessible to people with different ages and abilities when appropriately adapted.

Current evidence suggests potential benefits for healthy lifestyle behaviours, weight management, sleep, mental well-being, balance, and physical activity.

□cite□turn0search1□turn0search5□ WHO also recognizes yoga's potential contribution to physical activity, healthy ageing, and prevention-oriented health promotion.

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Yoga should nevertheless be viewed as one part of a broader preventive-health strategy. Vaccination, screening, nutritious food, adequate sleep, avoidance of tobacco, evidence-based treatment, and access to healthcare remain essential. A balanced approach can position yoga as a practical complementary practice for lifelong health and well-being.

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