



# Northern Michigan University Wildcat Wellness Connection

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*The purpose of the "Wildcat Wellness Connection" newsletter is to keep you informed about wellness related issues. Please note that information in this publication, along with other similar materials, is meant to complement the advice of your physician, not replace it. Before making any major changes in your medications, diet or exercise, please consult your physician.*

## **Questions and Comments**

*Please feel free to contact the Employee Wellness Graduate Assistant, Rhian Dalgord.  
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## **INSIDE THIS ISSUE:**

General Yoga  
Information

Yoga Supplies

Physical and Mental  
Benefits of Yoga

Types of Yoga

Upcoming Events

## **The Benefits of Yoga**

Yoga is a word that can bring a sense of peace or a sense of anxiety. This popular physical and mental health activity is seen at numerous fitness studios and can also be found on popular online fitness platforms. This type of physical fitness has been around for thousands of years and is geared towards all fitness capabilities. However, because of the complexity of some yoga poses, often individuals can feel overwhelmed and think that yoga is not a physical activity that they are capable of learning. The purpose of this newsletter is to bring you general knowledge about the practice of yoga along with the physical and mental benefits of regular yoga practice. Perhaps after reading this newsletter your fears will subside and you can try this popular fitness activity.

## **What Do I need to Attend a Yoga Class?**

Many yoga studios will provide general equipment that you will need to participate in a class. It may be beneficial to call prior to attending your first class to verify that you do not need to bring personal equipment. Listed below are items you will or may need to attend a yoga class.

Breathable Clothing  
Personal Water Bottle  
Yoga Mat

\*may be provided by the yoga studio\*

Foam Block

\*may be provided by the yoga studio\*

## What are the Physical Benefits of Yoga?

Yoga has numerous physical benefits that can range from restorative to strength building. With over 100 different types of yoga in existence, the benefits are endless. Yoga's core concepts focus on movement through various poses while paying attention to breathing and meditation. The flow through poses provides a great stretch for various muscle groups across the body. The breathing exercises found interwoven into the practice can provide direct benefits for managing chronic pain, lowering blood pressure and assisting with insomnia. The modifications of yoga poses allow every level of learner to benefit from its practice.

### **Additional physical benefits from yoga can include:**

- **Increase in Muscle Strength and Overall Tone:** Besides having notable changes in muscle tone, yoga improves muscle strength that helps with balance and prevention of issues such as back pain.
- **Improved Flexibility:** During your first practice, you may find it difficult to even touch your toes, but with repetition and loosening of your hips and hamstrings, poses will become easier over time.
- **Increased Energy**
- **Balancing your Metabolism**
- **Improvements in Cardiovascular Health such as Reducing Blood Pressure:** A recent study showed that regular practice of yoga over a 3-month interval resulted in a 26-point reduction in systolic blood pressure and a 15-point drop in diastolic blood pressure. Additionally, it is thought that the higher the initial blood pressure, the greater positive benefit of yoga practice.
- **Weight Management:** Regular practice can result in the burning of calories and can also lead to an increased awareness of food we put into our bodies. Many individuals find with regular yoga practice comes a more purposeful act of eating and awareness of how certain foods can make you feel overall.
- **Improvement in Bone Health:** Weight bearing exercises have a positive impact on your overall bone health. Poses such as downward facing dog improve the bone health in your arms, which is a common site of fracture in later years of life.
- **Injury Protection**
- **Posture Improvement:** A focus on alignment of the spine when moving through poses makes you more aware of your general posture throughout the workday. Leaning over a computer or cell phone for countless hours a day directly impacts your alignment and can contribute to neck and back pain.

## What are the Mental Benefits of Yoga?

Yoga serves to create a union between the mind and body through its practice. As we discussed, the physical benefits of yoga are endless. One of the key mental health benefits of yoga is its impact on stress management. The focus on breathing exercises has a direct impact on healthy coping skill development and enhancing one's perspective on life. Developing a routine practice has benefits including: a reduction in chronic pain, sleeping problems and headaches, increased ability to concentrate, overall mental clarity, increased awareness of one's own body and improvements in depression. Yoga has been found to improve depression by increasing levels of serotonin in the brain and decrease cortisol. With regular practice, one can be left feeling happier and more relaxed.

Further, the connection between body and mind can allow an individual to notice changes within the body quicker and can lead to earlier recognition and action.

## An Overview of Different Type of Yoga Classes

Glancing at a yoga class schedule can leave your head spinning if you are not familiar with the many different types of yoga that exist. Compiled is a list of common yoga practices that can guide you to make a class selection that best meets your personal and fitness needs. Don't forget, you can always call ahead to a studio and discuss with one of the instructors about what class would best fit your intentions.

**Ashtanga:** This rapidly flowing yoga progresses from one pose to the next with each inhale and exhale. Six pose sequences practiced repeatedly make up the core of this yoga practice.

**Bikram:** This type of yoga is practiced in a hot room that often feels sauna like. Temperatures can reach 105 degree with 40 % humidity. Traditional yoga poses are performed and a sweating is guaranteed.

**Hatha:** This is the most common yoga practice found in the United States and represents the classic yoga and breathing exercises that many individuals are familiar with.

**Jivamukti:** This yoga class is typically accompanied by a theme to focus on during the practice. This intense spiritual component provides a push in both the physical and mental practice realms.

**Prenatal:** This yoga is geared towards pregnant women at all stages of pregnancy. Postures are adapted to meet the stages of expectant mothers.

**Restorative:** This yoga is geared towards four to five simpler poses that progresses slowly. The use of blankets and bolsters provide support for the body throughout the poses. Many people find this type of yoga more relaxing with a notable decrease in physical strain.

**Vinyasa or Power:** This faster paced yoga focuses on moving through poses at a quicker pace or flow. Based on the instructor, the pace can vary but typically this class is a quicker format.

## Yoga Classes @ the PEIF

**Tuesday, February 27<sup>th</sup>**

4:00 p.m. - 4:50 p.m.	Vinyasa Yoga
5:30 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.	Hatha Yoga
6:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.	Beginner Yoga

**Wednesday, February 28<sup>th</sup>**

Noon - 12:50 p.m.	Relaxation Yoga
5:15 p.m. - 6:15 p.m.	Beginner Yoga

**Thursday, March 1<sup>st</sup>**

5:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.	Relaxation Yoga
5:30 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.	Core & Restore Yoga

**A new schedule regarding upcoming fitness classes will be released shortly. Check the NMU website for an update on upcoming yoga classes.**

## Upcoming Events

- **BASIC LIFE SUPPORT (BLS) Certification Course:**  
-Friday, March 16, 2018, 5:00 p.m.-9:00 p.m. PEIF 242  
-Friday, April 6, 2018, 5 p.m.-9:00 p.m. PEIF 242

### REGISTRATION FEE:

-NMU faculty and staff - \$60.00

If you have any questions, please feel free to call [\(906\) 227-2130](tel:9062272130).

- Be sure to check out <http://www.marquette365.com/> for upcoming local events

Stay up to date with future programs by liking our Facebook page: or by going onto our website:

<https://www.facebook.com/NMU-Employee-Wellness-109968062427048/timeline/>

<http://www.nmu.edu/wellness/>

### References

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## NORTHERN MICHIGAN UNIVERISTY

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**CHECK OUT:**  
[www.nmu.edu/wellness](http://www.nmu.edu/wellness)