

Evidence Update: Benefits of Yoga for Breast Cancer Survivors



Many benefits of yoga for breast cancer survivors have been documented in studies over the years. A very recent article in the *Journal of Clinical Oncology* (April 2014) looked at yoga's impact on inflammation, mood and fatigue in breast cancer survivors. Chronic inflammation is associated with declines in physical function and well-being. Fatigue is well documented in breast cancer survivors as negatively impacting activities of daily living. Persistent fatigue may be related in part to an overactive inflammatory process in the body. In this recent study 200 breast cancer survivors were randomly assigned to one of two groups - yoga and control group (no yoga). One group undertook 12 weeks of twice per week 90 minute Hatha Yoga classes. At the end of the 12 weeks, fatigue in the yoga group was not lower, but vitality was higher. At 3 months post yoga, fatigue was lower and vitality was still higher in the yoga group. The study also showed that more frequent practice produced larger improvements in inflammation, fatigue and vitality. Inflammation was decreased for the yoga group as compared to the control group at both post-treatment assessments. Depression did not differ between the two groups.

Exercise has proven to be the most consistently beneficial treatment for cancer related fatigue. The results of this study showed changes in fatigue and vitality similar to past studies that involved aerobic and resistance exercise programs as the intervention.

This is the first study of a physical activity trial with breast cancer survivors to show significant changes in inflammation. Even though the participants' weight did not change, and there was no aerobic or resistance exercise, the inflammatory markers were decreased. The yoga group also reported significantly improved sleep. Up to 60% of breast cancer survivors report problems with sleep and disturbed sleep leads to increased inflammation, highlighting another benefit of yoga.

TurningPoint continually strives to improve the quality of life of breast cancer survivors through research-based practices. We now offer a complimentary yoga class on Monday mornings from 9:00-10:00 am. Consider joining this dynamic and fun group of women and work towards feeling better, sleeping better and improving your overall health.

Kiecolt-Glaser JK et al. Yoga's Impact on Inflammation, Mood, and Fatigue in Breast Cancer Survivors: A Randomized Controlled Trial. *Journal of Clinical Oncology*. Volume 32 Number 10; April 1, 2014.