



Yoga in VA -Fact Sheet

Integrative Health Coordinating Center- VHA Office of Patient Centered Care & Cultural Transformation

Definitions

Yoga is a mind and body practice with origins in ancient Indian philosophy. The various styles of yoga typically combine physical postures, breathing techniques, and meditation or relaxation, and discussion on applications to daily life.

Background and Policy on in VA

Yoga is one of the evidence-based complementary and integrative health (CIH) approaches within the VHA Whole Health System of care included in the Veteran's medical benefits package when deemed clinically necessary by their care team per VHA Directive 1137 – Provision of Complementary and Integrative Health, published in May 2017. Based on literature review these approaches were found to be safe and have sufficient evidence of benefit to be recommended as appropriate components of care for the Veteran population.

Yoga Safety and Effectiveness

An evidence map of yoga for high-impact conditions affecting Veterans was developed by the VA's Health Services Research & Development office. Conditions with evidence of positive effect include nonspecific chronic low back pain. Conditions with evidence of potentially positive effect include depressive disorders, anxiety, and insomnia.

<https://www.hsrp.research.va.gov/publications/esp/yoga.cfm>

Yoga has been recommended as a first line treatment for acute and chronic low back pain in the clinical practice guidelines developed by the American College of Physicians. <https://annals.org/aim/fullarticle/2603228/noninvasive-treatments-acute-subacute-chronic-low-back-pain-clinical-practice>

Occupational Guidance

- Minimum Standards for Yoga Instructors to lead yoga for well-being classes in VA include holding a minimum experienced registered yoga teacher 200 (E-RYT 200) registration with Yoga Alliance OR an International Association of Yoga Therapists Certification (C-IAYT).
- Employees providing yoga must ensure yoga is in their scope of practice or national standards of practice; the Provider has the appropriate training (RYT 200 or equivalent) OR holds an International Association of Yoga Therapists Certification (C-IAYT); the provision of yoga is added to their scope/privilege; appropriate facility level approval to spend time in this activity
- At some facilities yoga is provided by qualified volunteers or community partners. They also must meet the minimum standards listed above. Learn how to volunteer for VA here: <https://www.volunteer.va.gov/>

Online Resources

Handouts and Experiential Videos <https://www.va.gov/WHOLEHEALTH/circle-of-health/moving-body.asp>

VHA Directive 1137: Provision of Complementary and Integrative Health:

https://www.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub_ID=5401