

Yoga for Medical Conditions

Justification for Referrals from Medical Professionals

Yoga is a holistic practice originating in ancient India. It encompasses; a physical practice and poses; breath work; and relaxation skills, including mindfulness.¹ Yoga is practiced by people in full health as well as those with illnesses and injuries and continues to grow in popularity among the general public.^{2,3}

Yoga can help patients with pain, stiffness, poor range of movement, reduced strength, decreased physical function, stress, hypertension, diabetes, cardiovascular risk factors, anxiety and depression.

Research has shown that yoga is a relevant and effective treatment option for musculoskeletal, chronic medical diseases including cardiovascular disease and diabetes, some mental health conditions and is recommended in several national medical guidelines and the NHS.

NICE guideline NG59 recommends yoga as a group exercise approach 'within the NHS for people with a specific episode or flare-up of low back pain with or without sciatica'.⁴ There have also been several systematic reviews relevant to non-LBP MSK conditions in recent years.⁵⁻¹⁰ All found yoga to be a helpful treatment option. I completed a systematic review regarding the use of yoga for non-LBP musculoskeletal conditions for my Masters dissertation. Yoga was found to significantly improve many variables in patients with MSK conditions and in healthy subjects, when compared to usual routine and active comparators.

The NHS website recommends mindfulness as a treatment for depression, stress and anxiety and that yoga is also beneficial for stress¹¹. NICE guidelines, CG90 and CG91, recommend mindfulness for those with a history of depression, those that are at risk of relapse and those with chronic depression despite previous treatment.^{12,13}

The Cochrane Review, yoga to prevent cardiovascular disease found yoga has favourable effects on diastolic BP, HDL cholesterol and triglycerides in adults with a high risk of developing cardiovascular disease.¹⁴ The NHS also recommends yoga for those at risk of cardiovascular disease.¹⁵

There are many research articles related to the use of yoga for type 2 diabetes. A systematic review in 2016 found yoga can help in type 2 diabetes management (glycaemic control, lipid levels and body composition).¹⁶

It is clear from the evidence that yoga is a relevant and effective treatment option for MSK, some mental health conditions, diabetes and cardiovascular risk factors and demonstrates a utility in holistic management.

Contact

For more information please contact Catherine Faulconer:

Email – c.faulconer@hotmail.com

Telephone – 07985 532992

Website – www.plymflowyoga.co.uk



Referral Guidelines for Medical Professionals

Appropriate	Not Appropriate
MSK conditions: OA, joint muscle/pain, spinal pain	Acute fractures/soft tissue injuries
Chronic pain	Medical conditions where light exercise/movement is not advised
Weakness, stiffness, reduced range of movement	Conditions that are not yet stabilised eg. cardiac, respiratory, BP
Stress	Acute post op
Anxiety	
Depression	
Type 2 diabetes	
Cardiovascular risk factors	
Able to move on and off the floor independently	Not able to get independently get on and off the floor
Able to lean on/take weight through arms and hands	Not able to lean on/take weight through arms and hands
Able to have head lower than body	Dizzy/light headed with moving between positions, including head lower than body then head up
	Not suitable to have head lower than body

Please contact me if you would like to discuss a case.

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