

Scientists Find Yoga Less Effective Than Traditional Exercise in Improving Vascular and Heart Function

In reviewing the scientific literature, researchers tend to downplay yoga's effectiveness in enhancing vascular and heart health

SHARJAH, EMIRATE OF SHARJAH, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES, September 8, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Contrary to widespread belief, yoga may be less effective than conventional forms of exercise in enhancing vascular health, according to a new study published in *Advances in Integrative Medicine*. (Original Source URL: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2212958825001156?via%3Dihub>)



Study tends to downplay yoga's effectiveness in enhancing vascular health. Credit: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?search=yoga&title=Special%3AMediaSearch&type=image>

The study systematically reviews existing literature, including randomized controlled trials, crossover trials, and non-randomized studies, comparing yoga and other exercise interventions in sedentary adults.

The researchers point out that their aim has been to assess the impact of these interventions on vascular function, as measured by ultrasound.

Vascular function refers to the ability of blood vessels to efficiently transport blood to tissues. The elasticity and responsiveness of these vessels are critical indicators of cardiovascular health.

Sedentary behavior and prolonged sitting are known to impair vascular function, increasing the risk of hypertension, cholesterol buildup, and thrombosis.

Co-author Dr. Leena David, a specialist in medical diagnostic imaging and lecturer at the

University of Sharjah, says, “Think of blood vessels like flexible garden hoses. If they stiffen, the risk of heart attacks and strokes increases. Our study shows that structured exercise keeps those hoses flexible, while yoga provides some benefits but not as reliably. Middle-aged and older adults often notice improvements from yoga, but younger adults might not.”

The findings are particularly relevant for the estimated 300 million people worldwide who practice yoga and the more than 620 million individuals affected by cardiovascular disease as of 2023.

The researchers conclude that traditional exercise modalities, such as Tai Chi, Pilates, and high-intensity interval training, consistently outperform yoga in improving vascular function among sedentary individuals.

Dr. David emphasizes that while movement is essential, the type, intensity, and consistency of physical activity are key determinants of vascular health.

“Even simple routines can make arteries more resilient. Blood vessels have a memory—and every workout helps them forget the damage of sitting all day,” she adds.

She also describes prolonged sitting as “the new smoking—silent, sneaky, and stealing years from your arteries,” adding that “movement is the perfect antidote.”

While yoga remains accessible and culturally significant, the study suggests that individuals seeking consistent cardiovascular benefits may need to supplement yoga with more vigorous forms of exercise.

The authors advocate for a nuanced approach to physical activity, especially in public health messaging.

“Yoga has deep cultural roots and shows promise as an inclusive, accessible health intervention,” Dr. David notes.

“At the same time, the fitness and digital health industries can leverage these insights to develop structured exercise programs and technology-driven solutions for sedentary populations.”

The researchers hope their findings will encourage healthcare providers to recommend exercise not only for weight management but also as a proven strategy for improving vascular health.

Although yoga may not consistently enhance vascular function, it remains a valuable option, particularly for older adults and those unable or unwilling to engage in high-intensity workouts.

“On a larger scale, public health campaigns could emphasize that movement is medicine,” Dr. David explains. “This may encourage a mix of exercise and yoga to make heart health more

accessible and culturally appropriate.

Forget the fitness goals—this is about protecting your body's internal GPS system that keeps you alive.”

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