

Lakeview Community Wellness Center Orthopaedic Connection

What About Yoga?

By Thomas J. Haverbush, M.D.
Orthopaedic Surgeon

Transforming patient information into patient understanding.

The problem of older patients falling is epidemic it seems. Hardly a day goes by that I don't see someone who has been injured in a fall.

It is really sad and furthermore a huge public health problem.

The Scope of the Problem

- The leading cause of injury death in people > 65. Falls.
- Fall related injuries cost \$55 billion annually.
- 30% of people > 65 fall one or more times per year.
- Osteoporosis and falling are double jeopardy.
- The more times you fall the more likely you will meet me in the ER!

Balance

Balance diminishes as we age. Why is that? Postural stability during standing or walking reduces with age for several reasons which is its own large topic. Among the many risk factors, balance impairment is near if not at the top of the list of causes of falling. In addition fear of falling or balance confidence is its own risk factor. Falls and fear of falling are a vicious cycle. If you are afraid you will fall, you reduce physical activity and movement and guess what? You lose strength which results in more falls.

The Solution

Many of the risk factors are hard to do much about. There is however strong evidence in support of physical exercise programs including yoga to manage balance and falls.

Yoga can be a benefit to older adults with decreased balance and who are at risk for falls and development of fear of falling.

Yoga

Yoga is a very old Eastern "medicine" program that is becoming more recognized in the U.S. and has potential to greatly improve the lives of older adults.

As yoga is practiced in the U.S., it may be considered exercise or physical activity and includes:

- postures
- meditation
- breathing to enhance relaxation
- flexibility
- balance
- strength
- mental and emotional well being

Key Point!

The combination of postures and breathing are best used together and because of the mind and body component yoga is more beneficial than exercise alone.

This gets a little fuzzy, but yoga engages the mind and body and the mind is focused on what is happening in the body and where the body is in space. Whew! See what I mean?

Yoga increases

- muscle strength and endurance
- flexibility
- cardiopulmonary endurance
- length of muscle groups

Yoga and Balance

Yoga addresses the fall factors of poor balance, impaired mobility and decreased strength and flexibility. Equally important is the mind – body interaction which can manage the anxiety of fear of falling.

Balance and range of motion are closely related to movement and flexibility of the hip.

While there are innumerable postures, each patient will have individual needs and a program can be tailored to benefit the needs of each patient.

The program is developed slowly, because patients don't all progress at the same rate. In most studies patients who have participated in yoga programs have encouraging comments about their improvement.

What Else?

There have been many studies about yoga as a mechanism to lower blood pressure. It was first used in 1973. This may be an additional benefit to patients who have need of yoga for balance improvement.

All balance therapy programs do not include yoga. It can only be used if the therapist is experienced in yoga postures and how yoga can be applied to our patients who may benefit.

There is no doubt yoga is becoming more mainstream in healthcare and will be available to benefit our patients keeping them out of the emergency room!

Please remember that anyone can make an appointment to see Dr. Haverbush at his office in Alma, at 315 Warwick Dr., across from Gratiot Medical Center. Call 989-463-6092 to make an appointment.

And don't forget every article I have written for Lakeview Area News is on my Website, www.orthopodsurgeon.com. Check it out. I specialize in you.

Be well.

Dr. Haverbush