

# YOGA

AND WOMEN'S HEALTH



KAIUT YOGA

I have a deep fascination with the human body and the tremendous potential it holds like a treasure chest of humanity. I admire the body's development process from childhood to adulthood, its ability to face profound transformations and still allow us to live our daily lives intensely. Yes, the body is a fantastic machine that takes us wherever we want and, often, for as long as we want.

**In my studies on the health of the body, I do not always make a distinction between male and female, after all, the Kaiut Yoga Method is for everyone, but I recognize that many have mistaken views about the woman's body. Some classify it as fragile and malleable, but I see a reservoir of strength designed by nature for many functions. Women's bodies go through various transformative and stressful processes, such as pregnancies, births, growth, aging, illnesses, and careers. I see in this ability the real manifestation of a system that is highly developed by nature to perform.**

Women are multifaceted, multitasking and multitalented, but they live under great pressure in our modern times. Even when they wish to take their personal and professional lives more lightly, they do not always succeed

in this task. After all, their current lifestyle is permeated by constant physical changes, some regulated by hormones, and stressful environments that can seriously affect women's health, physically and mentally.

As a result, cases of cardiovascular disease, breast cancer, polycystic ovaries, osteoporosis and depression have become very common. As if that were not enough, there is also stroke, obesity, hypertension and diabetes. Some of these diseases are related to hormonal imbalances in the endocrine system, sedentary lifestyle and poor eating habits.

The female body experiences unique issues throughout life that can cause numerous imbalances. From puberty to menopause, their bodies are affected by reproductive cycles and constant hormonal discharges that cause both physical and mental strain. In their 20s and 30s, they are torn between starting their careers, household chores, stressful menstrual cycles (some still suffer from the effects of PMS), pregnancy, among many other situations. The passing of the years does not always soften this load. It is common for women to take on more responsibilities with each passing year. When women reach menopause, their bodies

feel the effects of the end of the reproductive cycle, causing many to collapse with the new changes they have to deal with, especially related to hormonal imbalances. At this time, fatigue, pain, mood swings, hot flushes and changes in digestion often appear. In this age group, mobility problems and loss of health quality can also arise.

Yoga is the resource that unleashes a restorative process and can then help women face challenges across the lifespan. For young women, what is perhaps most powerful is the impact on the nervous system—the postures promote emotional balance and generate calm especially for those suffering hormonal imbalances, they eliminate toxins, stimulate the proper development of reproductive organs, and bring general wellbeing. Thus, with yoga, young women can experience a regular and healthy menstrual cycle.

For women going through menopause phase, yoga helps to increase muscle tone, cope with physiological and psychological changes, optimize the functioning of body organs, as well as promote hormonal balance, improve mood and quality of life. In general, at all stages of women's lives, practice is a powerful tool that helps women circumvent health problems. Part of the challenge however is that as women take on various responsibilities of modern life, they also commonly neglect to care for themselves.

Yoga is an option to change this unhealthy lifestyle. The practice is gentle and can help to deal with health problems, develop a state of full well-being, reduce stress and have the body more available. See the class as your private moment of care and attention. The postures help not only to tone muscles, have a flexible and strong body, but also have scientifically proven effects on the cardiac, respiratory and reproductive systems. Together, all these benefits lead to a healthier life, a more efficient body, quality of life and happiness.

I have countless students who have experienced the healing power of yoga. From some who have come out of a deep state of depression to others who have managed to overcome cancer diagnosis and surgery more easily. I decided to gather some of the inspiring stories that highlight the benefits of yoga for women, here in this e-book, I hope the content will make you reflect and think: why not?

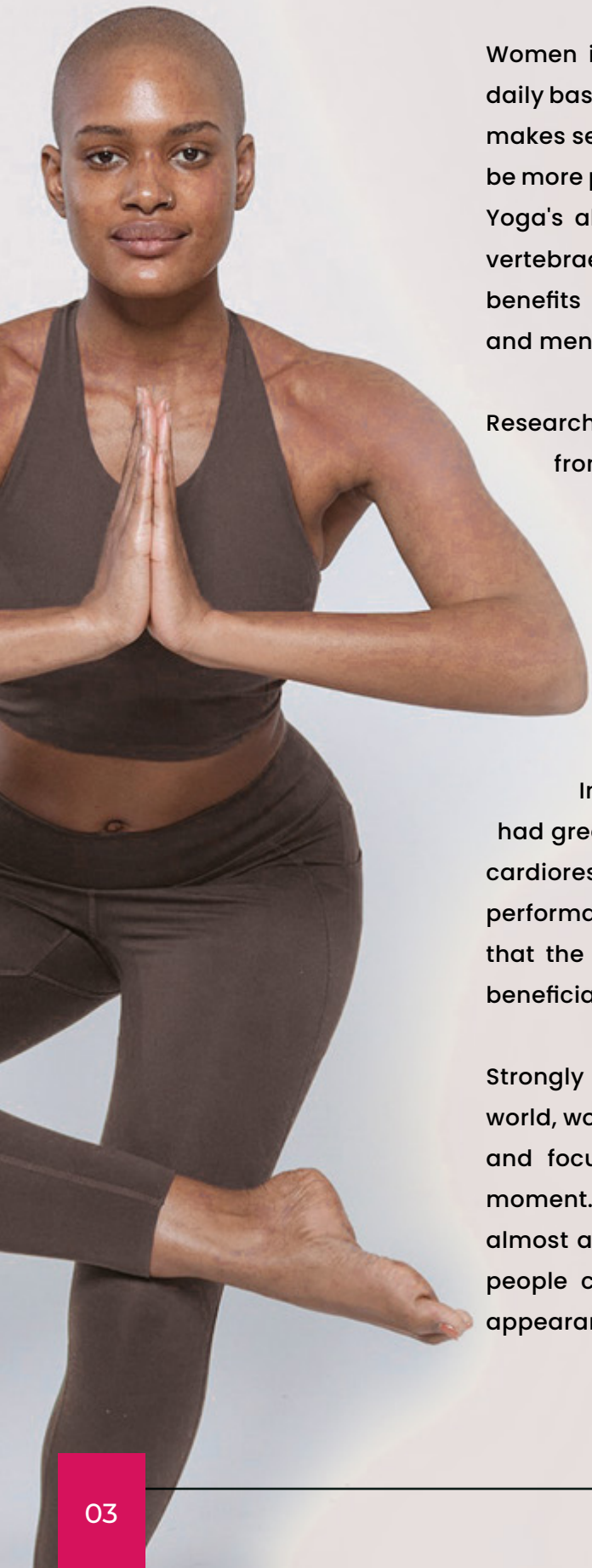
Happy reading!

*Francisco Kaiut*





## HOW YOGA CAN HELP women's health



Women in modern society face continuous challenges on a daily basis—perhaps you know this from personal experience. It makes sense then to look for a solution that helps them—you—be more physically and mentally available each and every day. Yoga's ability to act widely throughout the body, nourishing vertebrae and acting on the nervous system, brings many benefits to women, from muscle strength, to cardiovascular and mental wellbeing.

Research has shown that there are numerous benefits from practicing yoga, starting with the physical ones.

According to an article in Harvard Health Publishing, yoga improves fitness. The finding was based on the study of a small group of people with sedentary characteristics who did not practice yoga. They had their routine changed and started doing yoga twice a week for eight weeks.

In the end, it was proven that the research participants had greater muscular strength and endurance, flexibility and cardiorespiratory fitness. That is, the practice helps to improve performance even in other exercises. In view of this, it is clear that the combination of yoga and another activity is highly beneficial and recommended.

Strongly impacted by the aesthetic pressure of the modern world, women have in yoga an ally to develop inner awareness and focus attention on the body's abilities in the present moment. The article draws attention to a common feature of almost all yoga rooms, the absence of mirrors. This is so that people can direct their attention inwards and not on their appearance, the pose or other students.



This finding was the result of research that found that those who practiced yoga are more aware of their bodies than those who do not. They also feel more satisfied and less critical of their bodies. Because of these characteristics, yoga can help in treating eating disorders and those related to body image.

This awareness goes beyond the mat and reaches into other areas of a woman's life, including in relation to food—yoga practitioners are found to be more conscious eaters and better in tune with their bodies. The article from above also reported that awareness without judgment cultivated in yoga also influences the physical and emotional relationships of the act of eating. Thus, the practice helps to better understand how the body feels at mealtime, making it possible to savor the food with each bite or sip, feeling satisfied.

Furthermore, according to the researchers, people who practiced for at

least 30 minutes once a week for 4 years gained less weight in middle age. While those who were overweight lost weight. In general, those practicing yoga consistently over the course of years have lower body mass index (BMI) compared to non-practitioners. The research concluded that mindful eating promoted through yoga generated a more positive relationship with food and eating leading to such outcomes.

The article also cites a compilation of studies that have confirmed that yoga reduces cardiovascular risk factors by helping to lower blood pressure. This is due to the fact that the practice restores the sensitivity of baroreceptors (sensors located in the walls of major arteries and veins, and in the heart that are responsible for keeping blood pressure stable) which helps the body detect problems in blood pressure.

One such study found that yoga improved lipid profiles in healthy patients and others with known coronary artery disease. It also reduced blood sugar levels in non-insulin dependent diabetics and decreased the need for medication.



It is wrong to think that heart disease is more common in men. In the United States, for example, it was the leading cause of death among women, according to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, killing nearly 300,000 women in 2017, accounting for about one in five female deaths.

An article published by the medical journal *The Lancet*, based on 2019 data on the global scale of prevalence, mortality and risk factors, showed that cardiovascular diseases are the leading cause of death for women worldwide, accounting for 35% of deaths per year. Worldwide, 275 million women had a cardiovascular disease in the year of the survey, with the most deaths occurring due to cardiac ischemia and stroke.

This data reflects the importance of practicing yoga for women, as it has benefits for heart health and other issues. I say this based on a research that analyzed records of more than 1400 patients, published by the *European Journal of Preventive Cardiology*, which showed that regular yoga practice reduces cardiovascular risk factors. The researchers considered both cardiovascular disease and metabolic syndrome (associated with metabolic risks such as increased blood pressure, high blood sugar levels, excess body fat and abnormal cholesterol levels) which greatly increases the chance of cardiovascular problems.

For the researchers, one indicator of the mechanism behind the therapeutic effect of yoga for cardiovascular disease is because the practice can modulate autonomic function and positively alter markers of sympathetic and parasympathetic activity. Through the practice, it is possible to reduce the effects of stress, generating impacts on neuroendocrine status, metabolic and cardiovascular function, and related inflammatory responses.

Another issue that affects women a lot is osteoporosis caused by the decrease of the hormone estrogen that impacts the volume of minerals and calcium in the bones. Reversing this loss or preventing it from happening is among the benefits of the practice. This was the conclusion of a study conducted by the National Library of Medicine in 2015, which selected 741 people with a history of osteoporosis to be part of the research.

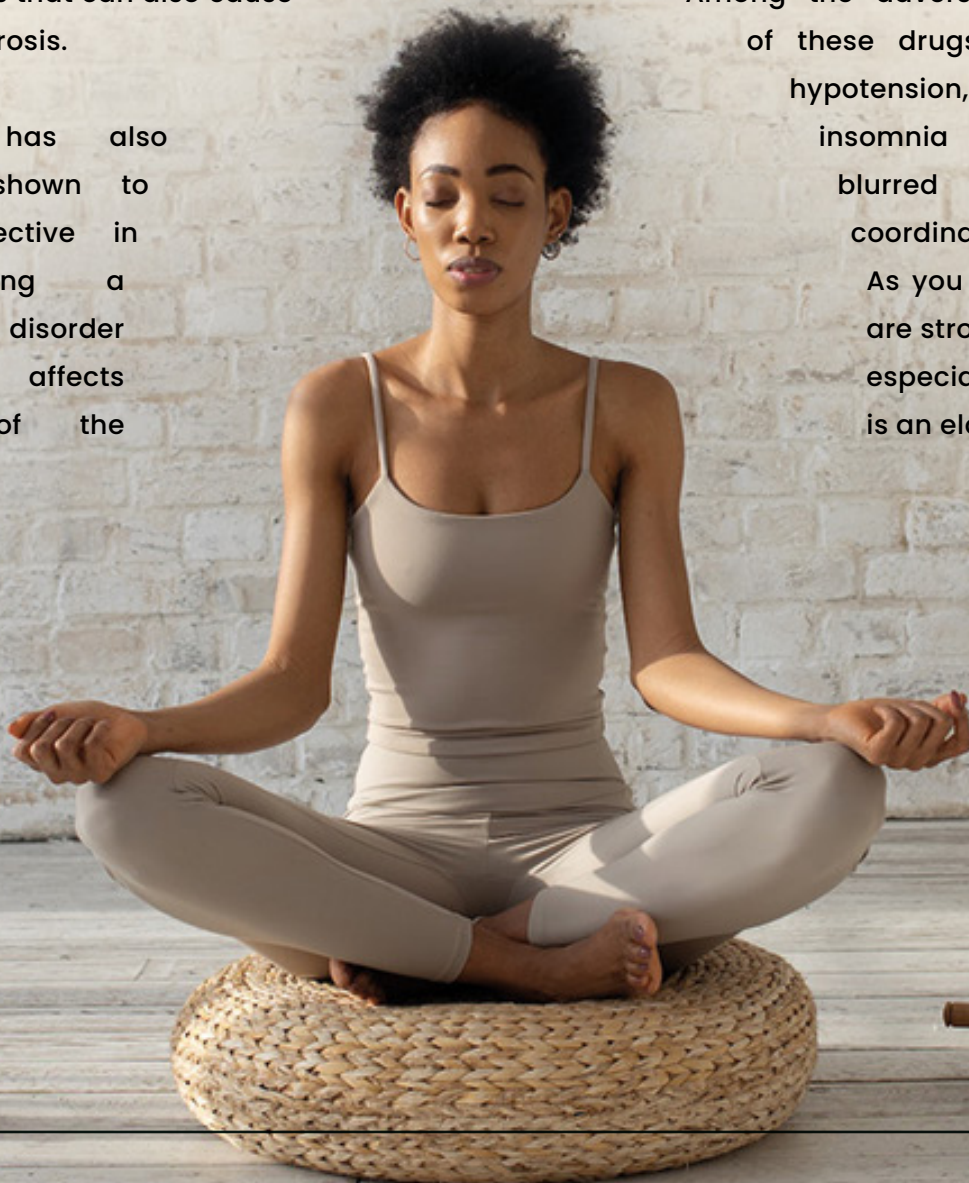
The group was recommended to practice a series of 12 postures. Of the 227 people that enrolled in the program, 202 were women. The average age of participants was 68 years old, 83% of which had bone density below normal. They practiced yoga every other day for two years, and by the end of the study, bone density had increased, with no participants reporting bone fractures or other injuries from yoga. That is, there were no side effects, with the yoga prescribed being low risk. The program further demonstrating that yoga, in addition to improving general health, improves body balance, preventing falls and, consequently, fractures that can also cause osteoporosis.

Yoga has also been shown to be effective in combating a sleep disorder that affects 29% of the

adult population in the United States and Europe—Restless Legs Syndrome (RLS), which occurs twice as often in women as in men. The condition is characterized by an uncontrollable urge to move the legs, almost always accompanied by uncomfortable sensations, and worsens or begins during periods of inactivity and at night.

Poor quality of life, diabetes, stroke and other serious chronic disorders are among the ills associated with RLS. Typically, treatment includes drugs that can cause serious side effects, such as opioids, sedative hypnotics, anticonvulsants and benzodiazepines.

Among the adverse side effects of these drugs are nausea, hypotension, dizziness, insomnia or drowsiness, blurred vision, and coordination problems. As you can see, these are strong side effects, especially if the patient is an elderly woman.





Faced with the disadvantages of traditional treatment, scientists from the Department of Community Medicine at the West Virginia University School of Medicine set out to find alternatives to pharmacological treatment and found yoga to be a promising option, as by analyzing existing studies they found that the practice reduces blood pressure, improves glucose tolerance, lipid profiles, autonomic function, improves mood and improves sleep. All of which are associated with risk factors for RLS.

To understand the effect of the practice on patients with RLS, the researchers recruited a group of 20 women to take 90-minute classes twice a week for 8 weeks. The class program was set up with active and restorative postures and the sessions began with breathing exercises and ended with a relaxation practice.

At the end of the practice period, the group showed improvement in sleep quality and also a reduction in stress, mood disorders, anxiety and blood pressure. For the researchers, the study indicated that yoga may offer a safe and beneficial intervention to reduce sleep and mood disorders, stress, anxiety and pressure in older women with RLS.



# DISCOVER THE POWER OF YOGA during pregnancy and menopause



Pregnancy is arguably the best time in your life to gain a balance of strength and flexibility, enhance and deepen your understanding and access to the breath, and cultivate the ability to relax—all capacities that can positively (or negatively) impact the experience of childbirth in particular. Indian researchers found that practicing yoga in prenatal care reduced the number of induced deliveries, fewer cesarean sections, better pain tolerance, among other benefits.

They studied a group of 200 women aged between 20 and 35 years, from 30 weeks gestation, who did not practice yoga and started doing 30-minute sessions until the 39th gestational week. In addition to the above advantages, the women who participated in the work reported relief from labor pain. Another finding was that the practice was not shown to have adverse effects. If they had started

practicing at the beginning of their term, imagine how many other benefits they would have.

In the prenatal period, I recommend that my students practice yoga, after all, the Kaiut Yoga Method brings together gentle and safe postures that do not put pregnant women at risk, on the contrary, they generate a sense of well-being. If you have any doubts, I would like to share some data from a study published by Harvard University.

The researchers selected 25 women between 35 and 38 weeks gestation to take yoga classes. Some had already had contact with the practice, while others were absolutely new. The

classes consisted of 26 postures and during the session, each woman's blood pressure, heart rate, temperature, oxygen levels and uterine contractions were monitored, as well as the fetal heart rate—a measure of the baby's well-being.

The mother and baby's vital signs were normal during the postures and after the session. Moreover, 24 hours after the session, none reported having any problems, they only rated the class as a positive experience. This result enabled the scientists to confirm the safety of the practice in late pregnancy. Another point confirmed by the study is that yoga is useful and safe for reducing stress, anxiety and depression during pregnancy.

These indicators are extremely positive, since, according to the study, more than half of all women experience anxiety at some point during pregnancy, and about 13% of pregnant women suffer from clinical depression. Yoga has been shown to relieve stress and anxiety during pregnancy and reduce levels of the stress hormone cortisol. Indeed, yoga is an integral therapy composed of breathing exercises, meditation and deep relaxation.

## TIPS FOR PRACTICING YOGA DURING PREGNANCY\*

- Focus on stability and strength
- Use modifications, props or a wall to make the posture more stable and secure
- Don't push yourself too hard when you need to use flexibility
- Avoid practicing in very hot environments

Source: Harvard Health Publishing

**Pregnancy is, in fact, a time in a woman's life when she is most susceptible to stressors. At this stage, they experience profound transformations and need to adapt to physiological, psychological, social and emotional changes. In short, they face the changes in their bodies and still need to take care of the demands of everyday life, the preparation for the birth of the baby and the numerous visits to doctors to monitor the pregnancy, among many other issues.**

When they develop stress, they suffer from anguish, anxiety, depression and, in more chronic conditions, both pre- and postpartum, symptoms can affect the affective bond between mother and baby. Faced with the number of problems they may experience, yoga is an alternative to develop self-knowledge, autonomy and self-care before childbirth, during and throughout women's lives.

Stress was also the focus of a review article that analyzed 124 studies interested in the relationship of yoga practice in pregnancy and stress symptoms. The studies were sourced from many different countries and consequently cultures. In general, the conclusion of the review was that the practice of yoga by pregnant women reinforces the association between the practice with a better functioning of the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis and, consequently, the functioning of the autonomic nervous system.

The researchers also concluded the efficacy and effectiveness of prenatal yoga practice without detecting adverse effects. On the contrary, it was found that to combat clinical conditions of depression and anxiety in pregnancy, the practice is recommended both preventively and complementarily in the treatment of symptoms and mood disorders in pregnancy.



It is known that the practice provides numerous benefits, including physical and mental for pregnant women, including strengthening the pelvic floor, improving pain, breathing, reducing stress and anxiety, increasing self-confidence and self-esteem, among others. Yoga empowers pregnant women to fully live one of the most beautiful and full moments of a woman's life.

Towards the later years of a woman's life, when ovarian function reduces or ends, a new whirlwind of symptoms afflicts her. Hot flushes, night sweats, tiredness, aches and pains, reduced libido and mood swings are among the most uncomfortable symptoms of menopause. They persist for some years and compromise women's quality of life. However, with increasing life expectancy, this means many women spend a third of their lives post-menopause. Therefore, it is essential to incorporate an integrative therapy before or even during this period.

With yoga it is possible to strengthen health and even cure diseases. Some scientists suggest that this is because there are neurohormonal pathways that have a selective effect on each type of disease.

For example, it has been found that plasma cortisol levels increase in cases of bronchial asthma and decrease in diabetes after practicing pranayama. The justification given by the researchers is that the practice normalizes the disease by controlling counter-regulatory hormones or by increasing receptor sites.

This is how the reports of the benefits are so wide-ranging. Each person, life story and body has a different positive response to yoga. In menopause, symptoms can be alleviated, quality of life improved, generating longevity with a full body. In combating the symptoms of menopause, the practice can improve the effects of climacteric, stress and emotional instability.





## YOGA & FEMALE EMPOWERMENT

Yoga is a powerful holistic health resource, but I would like to extrapolate this concept beyond curing illness. The practice is also a tool for female empowerment, as it broadens body awareness, relieves anxiety and increases happiness. It is no surprise that the practice can also improve women's sexual function.

An article published by Harvard Health Publishing brought the findings of a study by researchers from universities in New Delhi and Mumbai on regular practice and the improvement of various aspects of women's sexual function, including related to desire, arousal, orgasms and overall satisfaction. The study was done with 40 healthy women, aged 22 to 55, in India.

Most participants were married and sexually active. They were offered 22 yoga postures for 12 weeks, one hour a day, designed to increase abdominal and pelvic muscle tone, digestion, joint function and mood. In some cases, the postures were adapted so that each woman could do the full version proposed by the researchers.

At the outset, all participants completed a questionnaire that asked about sexual function.

At the end of the program, the researchers were surprised by the reports that showed improvements in the sexual aspect of all participants, in six domains evaluated: desire, arousal, lubrication, orgasm, pain and overall satisfaction. There were more benefits for those over 45. They reported improvements in arousal, lubrication and pain. Another interesting finding is that almost 75% of the women reported that they were more satisfied with their sex life after the program.

Female sexual pleasure is still stigmatized in part of our society, so having a resource that can improve some aspects of this area is an act of empowerment. For those who go through several pregnancies or who suffer from situations that cause pelvic floor dysfunctions, such as urinary incontinence, the practice can also be an alternative to increase endurance, flexibility and muscle strength, in addition to, consequently, improving the quality of female life.

It is worth remembering that in the female body, the pelvic floor muscles act on the lower part of the pelvis and work with ligaments and other tissues to fix the bladder, uterus and rectum in the pelvic cavity, the urethra and the vagina. This region is related to excretion, reproduction, sexual behavior and other female functions.

Indian researchers conducted a study to assess the impact of yoga to prevent issues related to pelvic floor dysfunction in 50 healthy women. It is estimated that 46.2% of women

worldwide suffer from urinary incontinence, for example, an ailment linked to problems with the pelvic floor. Elderly women account for 9.9% with this.

Women with this condition also experience physical and mental stress due to these symptoms, also affecting their personal and professional lives. It is worth mentioning that risk factors for these conditions include multiple pregnancies, vaginal deliveries, obesity, perineal tears, heavy lifting and abdominal surgeries.

The participants were aged between 20 and 60, had vaginal births (natural), did a 12-week program and, at the end, it was found that there was an increase in the strength of the pelvic floor muscles. From this conclusion, scientists recommended women to incorporate the practice into their life routine as a preventive measure to avoid pelvic floor dysfunction, thus avoiding surgical interventions. In addition, yoga is an accessible approach for all women.

In the postpartum period, it is very important to have a full rehabilitation of the pelvic floor to help the recovery of the vagina, in the case of natural childbirth, relieve tension and normalize the elasticity of the muscles, in addition to



preventing possible disorders in this region of the body. Seeking alternatives to contribute to this process, a Chinese researcher studied the effect of muscle contraction promoted by yoga postures in women shortly after having children.

The scientist notes that the pregnant woman's body goes through a series of changes, among them, the expansion of the uterus and the secretion of relaxin (a substance produced by the placenta and ovaries that helps soften the pelvic joints and ligaments to facilitate the baby's exit) end up impacting the pelvic floor muscles.

There is also the gradual growth of the fetus which causes the weight of the uterus to increase; the waist and abdomen protrude forward, putting extra pressure on the area. And all this happens over 9 months, continuously and concentrated in the same place. Although the pelvic floor has some elasticity, pressure and weight weaken this elasticity of the pelvic floor muscle.

In order to verify the effectiveness of yoga in helping women recover from postpartum, the scientist selected 40 parturients and divided them into two groups: one underwent a rehabilitation program using yoga and the other localized exercises. Data were collected from 42 days to 3 months after delivery. During this period, ultrasounds were performed to analyze the results, using as

reference the position of the bladder meridian, the uterus and the rectal ampulla.

With the study, it was possible to verify that the practice of yoga helped both in the faster recovery of the patients and in the indicators of their mental health. The scientist reinforces that there is a concern in academia about the proportion of pregnant women at risk of postpartum depression. Considering that the practice is a body and mind therapy, it also helps to improve mental health, but we will deal with this topic later.

Now, I would like you to know that yoga works on pelvic health because during the postures, the abdominal breathing reaches the pelvic floor muscles, both when the student inhales and when she exhales. This movement moves up and down the body, promoting a kind of massage and stimulation in the muscles. When I talk about pelvic health, I am referring to a well-functioning bladder, bowel and sex life. Another relevant point is that the practice also acts for women to develop other positive health behaviors such as healthy eating.

# YOGA TO INCREASE women's happiness

As I have already said, yoga is not limited to improving the physical fitness of women, but it is also a tool that acts to improve the emotional state and, consequently, in the mood and sense of well-being. The practice is proven to be effective in reducing stress, anxiety, depression and insomnia. Overall, it largely affects women's mental health.

A study in the International Journal of Preventive Medicine investigated the effects of the practice on stress, anxiety and depression in women. The study was done on 52 women with an average age of 33.5 years who practiced one hour of yoga, three times a week over the course of a month. Although the study was done for a relatively short time, the researchers found that the practice was effective in reducing these issues.

For the researchers, this attests to yoga as a complementary medicine alternative, reducing the cost of treatment and use of medicines. The 12 sessions applied by the scientists reduced the effect of stress, anxiety and depression in women. By experiencing a more balanced state of mind, women have their body awareness improved and start acting to build more health and happiness into their lives.

For me, happiness and well-being are not supernatural or mystical phenomena. You can take action to become a happy woman and it all happens in your brain, with the

expansion of your neural network and your focus to build a positive emotional state. The practice of yoga creates a neurological ballast and this work promotes brain plasticity.

**In Kaiut Yoga Method classes I recommend my students to categorize their practice as a new habit. It has to be something you do on a daily basis, without intellectualizing and without effort. Think of the practice as a nurturing moment made especially for you. Whenever you direct your attention to the mat, you will stimulate an immense medium and long-term transformation in your life.**

**It is crucial to activate a change of point of view, being more positive and active to build a health habit. Categorize the practice as something healthy, a moment of full happiness. This positive categorization will certainly help you to evolve day by day.**

Importantly, do not categorize any moment of yoga practice as effort. It is crucial that at all moments the practice is categorized as a moment and practice of kindness and self-care, only with this categorization will your brain register the positive reinforcement. Good memories and trust are key to strengthening neural connections. Every cell of yours will develop with safety, sharp perception and emotional positivity. As it evolves, the results will start to be noticed more and more.





# CONCLUSION

The practice of yoga can be started at any time of life, however, the effects are cumulative, so—the sooner, the better. Start practicing at any stage of life so that, in the future and when major challenges arise, the results are consolidated. And when it comes to future pregnant women, if yoga is not already part of your life, my recommendation is the same: don't wait, ideally start doing yoga before the gestational period.

Yoga should represent a place of safety to which a woman returns to nourish her body, connecting to her nature, positively transforming her state of harmony and full health. When this happens, she also experiences a more lasting happiness or so-called eudaimonic happiness.

This is the inner happiness and characteristic

of those who can give more meaning to their life. It is when they discover their true self and yoga has the ability to create that neurological ballast.

So, do Kaiut Yoga as often as possible and as early as you can. This way, you will have access to this tool of connection with nature and a safe haven in life for the challenging moments that we do not know when they will arise, but that they simply happen and are part of life.

As we have seen in the previous pages, women experience several phases in their lives and in almost all of them, the body undergoes major changes. This is the case in adolescence, when they have children or when they face the menopause. In view of this specificity of women, the practice of yoga cannot be based on always doing the same postures.

I always talk about consistency, but that doesn't mean being repetitive. The Kaiut Yoga Method is structured in a series of combinations that reach different parts of the body in each class, even if the student is novice or experienced.

Yoga is a practice available for all life cycles. In the pre and postpartum period, for example, women need more attention to the pelvic floor. In menopause, more attention can be given to the varied symptoms women experience. Each unique body will always need particular work too.

I would like to come back to a topic, the health of the human pelvic floor. Today, what is known about the health of the human pelvic floor, and not only female, is very relevant.

We know about quality of life dysfunctions, the need for active consideration of this region and its value to both men and women. This is a region extensively contemplated and well addressed by yoga since its origins.

In my classes, every class, even with the youngest students, I understand the value of all the positions that in some way encourage pelvic health and the health of the pelvic floor itself. That is one of the parts that benefits from yoga.

In any case, it's important to know that your whole body holds incredible potential, you just need to start treating it with the care and attention it needs.



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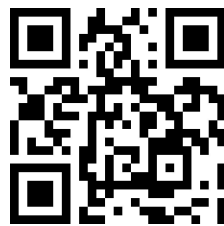
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OLD!  
WHO PRACTICES ONLY IMPROVES!  
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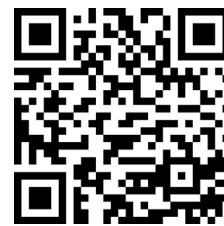
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