

Eli's Rehab Report

Clinical Rehab Roundup: Say "Om": Yoga Practice Could Decrease Falls Risk

Endurance levels could improve, too.

Effect of a 12-Week Yoga Intervention on Fear of Falling and Balance in Older Adults: A Pilot Study. Schmid, A, Van Puymbroeck, M, Koceja, D. Arch Phys Med Rehabil Vol 91, 576-583. Older patients who perform yoga could see huge improvements in balance and stability and decrease falls risk -- even after a short period of time.

A recent study of 19 men and one woman measured balance using the Berg Balance Scale and Fullerton Advance Balance Scale before and after an eight-week twice-weekly hour-long group yoga class. At the end of the program, the participants' measures improved by 17 percent and 34 percent, respectively.

What they did: The yoga poses were modified to meet patients' needs, according to the study published in the Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation. At the beginning of the program, participants performed the poses while seated in chairs and then graduated to standing poses and floor work.

In addition to increased balance, the participants also increased their endurance measures on a seated twominute step test and a six-minute walk test.

Note: Researchers didn't have to work too hard to convince the male participants to give yoga a shot, according to lead researcher **Arlene A. Schmid** of **Indiana University**. Because the program began after the participants were discharged from other therapies, the yoga gave them a way to continue improving and staying active.

The catch: Not just any yoga will do, Schmid cautioned. The yoga instructor should also be trained in "anatomy and physiology and how to work with people with disabilities," she notes.