

# YOUR FAMILY



When you feel a headache coming on, an alternative (and healthier) approach to popping a pill could be taking some yoga time out. Here are yoga poses to relieve headaches.

For centuries men and women have seen yoga as a solution to peace and wellbeing, and a feeling of being at one with your environment. However, studies have shown that yoga has many other benefits, too, one of them being treatment for certain types of headaches. A 2014 study found that headache frequency and intensity was reduced in people who practised yoga in addition to their regular treatment regimen. Experts in the industry agree.

Dr Elliot Shevel, medical director of The Headache Clinic, says regular exercise is frequently recommended for migraine treatment. Many studies have reported beneficial effects of aerobic exercise on both frequency and intensity of migraines as well as on the duration of the attacks and on the patient's wellbeing. However, around 22% of migraine patients complain that exercise was a trigger factor and hence some patients avoid exercise and are physically less active, he adds.

## How it works

In yoga, slower movements or static muscular exercises are performed with mindfulness, and you focus on your poses while you work. You have to feel the movements and develop awareness of your body and body motion. This is why yoga, a slow non-exertional aerobic exercise, is more beneficial than pure aerobic exercise. 'Studies have shown that yoga is better than aerobic exercise at enhancing mood and alleviating stress and depression,' says Dr Shevel.

The use of yoga in the treatment of illness is not new. It's effective in treating numerous chronic diseases such as asthma, diabetes, arthritis, fibromyalgia, depression and ischemic heart disease, where stress is believed to play an important role. In headaches and migraines in particular, stress is one of the most common triggers.

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## POSES TO PONDER

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- 1 Shoulder stand (Sarvangasana): This position helps calm a headache, as reversing the effects of gravity can help alter your blood pressure, which can be just what the doctor ordered if you're suffering from a tension headache, or from a headache caused by a change in blood pressure. Doing some slow rhythmic breathing while you're at it will help even more.



- 2 Headstand (Salamba sirsasana): This pose stimulates the nervous system, the abdominal organs, and blood flow in the head area. Inversions are beneficial for headaches stemming from improper functioning of the liver, spleen, stomach, and large intestine. Vision will improve with regular inversion practices such as headstand and shoulder stand.



- 3 Seated forward fold (Paschimottanasana): This pose will relieve upper and lower back pain, toning the spinal nerves and improving blood circulation in the back. Seated forward folds relax the entire body by stretching the muscles from the neck to the feet. This pose is especially beneficial for headaches caused by issues related to digestion, sinus, and menopause.



- 4 Standing forward fold (Uttanasana): In this pose, your head is below your heart. This allows the unusual occasion for blood to rush to your head (rather than your feet), giving your cells a rejuvenating oxygen boost.



- 5 Corpse pose (Shavasana): The corpse pose rejuvenates the body by bringing it into a deep state of meditative rest. The yoga routine should be ended by lying down in this pose for a couple of minutes. This simple yoga posture will lessen the impact of a migraine attack and may eventually stop them permanently.

