

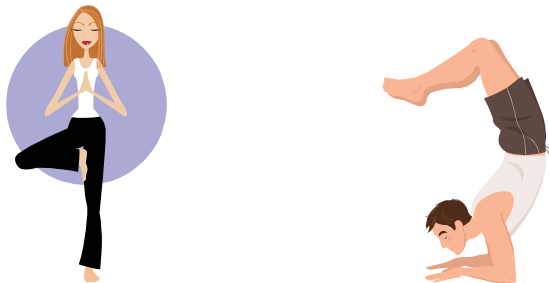
Yoga and Nutritional Balancing
Rosalie Malter, M.A., E-RYT 500
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Yoga is a way of life, not just an exercise system. All aspects of yoga work towards balance, which is the definition of physical and mental health. The movement/exercise aspect of yoga is called *hatha* yoga. “Ha” or sun energy and “tha” or moon energy are joined via yoga, which means “to yoke”.

Yoga philosophy includes the “four fountains,” our basic drives for food, sleep sex and self-preservation. In the recommendations regarding food there is discussion of the different tastes: sweet, salty, sour, pungent, bitter and astringent. In our culture, sweet and salty tastes predominate, but the full variety of tastes is necessary for a balanced diet. When one eats this full variety of tastes he/she is more likely to consume a full range of nutrients. Of course this advice was more valid hundreds of years ago, when the soils were not yet depleted. Today, in addition to healthy and balanced diets, balancing of nutrients requires supplementation.

Both yoga and nutritional balancing (NB) contribute to stress management, essential in handling our modern high stress lifestyles. Yoga contributes to stress management by utilizing slow stretching and holding that stretch to relax muscles, and deep diaphragmatic breathing to calm the nervous system. If a student has low energy, other yoga postures can be rejuvenating or stimulating, bringing the energy more towards a balanced state. Pranayama practice (various breath control techniques) can be either calming or stimulating also, always working towards balance.

NB, as guided by hair Trace Mineral Analysis (TMA) can help balance the autonomic nervous system also. Sympathetic (the alarm system) and parasympathetic (rest and digest). Rest and digest sounds more ideal, but too much parasympathetic input can lead to burn-out and low energy. It’s a delicate balancing act, just like some yoga balance postures.



NB proceeds by looking at mineral ratios. Some of these ratios can affect ability to do yoga postures. For example, copper (Cu) contributes to flexibility, so a low Zn/Cu ratio, which can have many negative health repercussions, also increases ability to do postures that require flexibility.



Often students get muscle cramps while doing yoga postures. Usually that is an indication of a high calcium/magnesium (Ca/Mg) ratio, as Ca causes muscle contraction and Mg causes muscle relaxation. As a yoga teacher, I always suggest students get a hair TMA test if they are getting a lot of cramping in class. Invariably they show up with a low Mg or a high Ca/Mg ratio. High Ca/Mg is also associated with sugar cravings, which upsets the taste balance mentioned above.

Ideally, having a balanced lifestyle in these stressful times would include a yoga practice (including meditation) and an NB regimen, guided by hair TMA with a knowledgeable practitioner.



For more information on yoga and health coaching, contact Rosalie Malter, M.A., E-RYT 500, at royoga@cablone.net or on the website www.malterinstitute.org.