

## **Five reasons why you may want to include yoga in your cancer-recovery plan**

### **Yoga strengthens the immune system.**

The goal of strengthening the immune system is to keep all of the body's systems working together. It takes a village: Failure of any one system threatens the health of the whole community. Research shows that cancer therapies such as yoga that seek to strengthen the immune system are increasingly proving to be helpful in a wide variety of cancers.

### **Yoga detoxifies the body.**

Detoxification is the vital metabolic process by which dead cells and toxins are excreted from the body. Yoga is the muscle of the lymphatic system—the body's plumbing and rubbish-removal system. Similar to how the heart muscle circulates blood, yoga increases lymphatic flow with specific breathing and movement practices. Inversions, a fundamental part of yoga practice, utilize movement and body positioning to reverse the effects of gravity on our body, enhancing the process of cardiovascular and lymphatic drainage.

Another way in which yoga detoxifies the body is through compression. B. K. S. Iyengar called it the "squeeze and soak" process, which cleans internal organs in the same way that a sponge discharges dirty water when squeezed. For example, abdominal twists activate internal organs and guide the release of toxins into the lymphatic system.

### **Yoga builds bones.**

Our bones house bone marrow, where new red and white blood cells are constantly being produced. White blood cells are needed to form leukocytes, our natural cancer-fighting immune cells. If our bones are compromised from a break or from osteoporosis (a side effect of chemotherapy), so too is the production of a nourishing blood supply and immune protection.

Yoga can help build bone strength and density.

### **Yoga reduces stress.**

Yoga can enhance feelings of positivity. The results of a 2009 study on the effects of yoga on emotions found an increase in positive emotions such as calmness and a sense of purpose. Women participating in a 10-week program of restorative yoga classes gained positive differences in aspects of mental health such as depression, positive emotions, and spirituality (feeling calm and peaceful), as compared to the control group.

### **Yoga increases your range of movement**

Moving freely post-surgery can sometimes become challenging. Scar tissue often reduces a range of movement. Regular yoga practice can help to improve motion and flexibility, making common everyday-activities like reaching for that basket on the top shelf more comfortable.