

The Social and Economic Case for Yoga

Yoga practice provides a low-cost and scalable solution to major challenges facing the UK. In over 300 RCTs, yoga's efficacy has been shown to have a statistically meaningful positive effect on mental health (including anxiety, stress, depression, and PTSD), physical health (including muscular-skeletal conditions, and being NICE-approved for lower back pain), emotional regulation, and autonomic regulation. Unlike single approach interventions, yoga practice brings about multi-level benefits because it works simultaneously at the mental, physical, and whole-body system levels. The return on investment is high because yoga classes are inexpensive to run.

Economic Benefits

- A Harvard study of over 17,000 patients found that the 4,452 who engaged in mind-body techniques needed 43% fewer hospital visits, saving nearly \$9 million dollars in healthcare costs (Stahl, 2015).
- NHS staff offered yoga classes took far fewer days off sick. There was a 95% probability of the programme being cost-effective (Hartfiel, 2014)
- A University of Yoga and Arthritis UK study showed that there was a 95% probability of cost effectiveness for the Healthy Lower Backs programme for chronic lower back pain, gaining NICE approval (Tilbrook et al, 2011).
- There is a huge mental health crisis in schools, with only 40% of youngsters receiving the care they need from the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), according to the Health Select Committee. NHS Digital says the rates of probably mental health disorders among 6-16 years olds has risen from one-in-nine in 2017, to one-in-six by March 2021 (17%) during the Covid pandemic. Schools are increasingly integrating yoga-based breathing, mindfulness, and relaxation techniques to support pupil welfare.

APPG Focus of Work

Yoga improves: **fitness** (flexibility, strength, coordination, balance, respiratory function); **self-regulation** (stress management, emotional regulation, resilience, equanimity, self-efficacy); and **awareness** (attention, mindfulness, concentration, cognition). The APPG on Yoga in Society aims to integrate the benefits of evidence-based yoga into 4 areas: -

- **Healthcare** – supporting universal personalised care, social prescribing, and patient activation to tackle non-communicable diseases, including obesity crisis. Supporting NHS staff.
- **Education** – tackling the teen mental health crisis, and offering tools to support children and parents of primary and secondary pupils.
- **Prisons** – a recognised intervention for rehabilitation. Helps break cycle of reoffending by encouraging personal responsibility for wellbeing - physical, mental and spiritual. Supports resilience in prison staff.
- **Workplace** – lowering absenteeism and supporting wellbeing programmes.

Research Examples

- Systematic reviews of yoga interventions for patients with cardiovascular disease and Type 2 diabetes showed significant improvements in physiological markers, including lower blood pressure, HDL, cholesterol, and triglycerides.
- A meta-analysis of 19 studies showed that yoga was effective at reducing the severity of depression (Brinsley et al, 2019).
- Yoga was found to be almost as effective as cognitive behaviour therapy in treating generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) (Simon et al, 2021)
- Yoga improves behavioural control and decreases psychological distress among prison population (Bilderbeck et al, 2013)