

Inside Integrative Medicine

April 2024

Pranayama and Yoga Nidra: Less-known Yoga Practices That Can Help You During and After Cancer Care

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More than 2,000 years ago, Patanjali in the Yoga Sutras outlined a philosophy and practice designed to achieve a calm state of mind leading to good health, happiness, and being at peace. The yoga that is commonly practiced today, with an emphasis mainly on the physical aspects of the practice, incorporates only a small aspect of what was recommended by Patanjali. In fact, Patanjali placed more emphasis on the importance of breathing exercises (pranayama) and meditation (dharana, dhyana).

The word *Pranayama* is a combination of two words, *prana*, which refers to life force or energy, and *ayama* meaning expansion or control. Pranayama is the regulation and expansion of breath, roughly translated as breathing exercises. These breathing techniques have multiple health benefits, such as decreasing the harmful effects of stress on our bodies, both physically and mentally. Unlike yoga postures, most pranayama practices can be practiced quietly anywhere. Even brief pranayama practices (5-10 minute) can have important benefits, regardless of our physical abilities.

Studies have found that pranayama creates a relaxed state, reducing stress, stress hormones, heart rate, and blood pressure. Research shows pranayama may benefit people with asthma, lung disease, heart disease, anxiety, and other disorders. For individuals with cancer, pranayama can help decrease fatigue, pain, anxiety, and depression, as well as improve overall quality of life.

There are many different types of pranayama practices; examples involve slow/deep breathing, breath-holding, and humming. Some practices are relaxing, some energizing, and others simply calm the mind in preparation for meditation. Choosing a practice that works for you and practicing every day, even a little, can have long-lasting benefits and change how you typically react in stressful situations. The goal of regular pranayama practice is to help achieve a peaceful state of mind and to return to this state more easily when it is disturbed by stress. While most pranayama practices are safe, it is advisable to consider your physical condition and learn safe techniques from an experienced yoga therapist.

What is Yoga Nidra?

Yoga Nidra means “psychic sleep” or “conscious rest.” Yoga Nidra is a guided meditation designed to lead the practitioner into a profound state of relaxation and inner awareness. It is a technique used to access a state between sleep and awareness while listening to a guide. While specific yoga postures can be challenging for some, Yoga Nidra is something everyone can do and it takes about 30-45 minutes.

Yoga Nidra has been widely used to manage stress, anxiety, posttraumatic stress disorder, chronic pain, and sleep disorders in veterans and other populations. In individuals with cancer, Yoga Nidra is beneficial in managing pain, anxiety, fatigue, and sleep as well as improving quality of life.

A Variety of Yoga Programs Are Available in Person and Virtually through the Integrative Medicine Program

All programs are taught by a certified yoga therapist (CIAYT) specializing in cancer care. Group yoga classes are only available virtually. Individual yoga/meditation consultations are available either virtually or in-person.

Yoga for Health is a virtual group-based yoga class. This beginner/intermediate yoga program is offered three times a week (25 maximum participants). Yoga Nidra/Meditative and Pranayama/Breathing are offered twice a month on Tuesdays. All group classes are available for patients and caregivers for FREE and do not require a referral.

In addition to group classes, one-on-one Yoga/Meditation consultation sessions are also available for inpatients and outpatients at \$50 per session. A referral is required. All aspects of the program are personalized to meet your unique needs. If you are interested in learning more about this consultation, please contact our center. We look forward to seeing you “on the mat”!

For more information, please contact the Integrative Medicine Center at 832-750-3685.



Integrative Oncology Consultation

Our physicians can give guidance on achieving a comprehensive and integrative approach to your cancer care.

Exercise/Physical Activity Consultation

A senior physical therapist provides recommendations on achieving safe and optimal exercise during each consultation.

Oncology Acupuncture Treatment

Acupuncture is a safe and often effective medical treatment that can be used to manage side effects from cancer and related treatments, including nausea and vomiting, pain, neuropathy, hot flashes, fatigue and dry mouth. Cost: \$80 per treatment.

New: now offering acupuncture at the League City location!

Oncology Massage Treatment

Oncology massage may help patients address anxiety, relieve pain, decrease fatigue and improve sleep quality. Treatments are \$55.

*Prices for IMC services may be subject to change depending on insurance coverage.

View audio and video resources online: www.mdanderson.org/integrativemedcenter

Health Psychology Consultation

A licensed clinical psychologist will provide both evaluation and interventions to help with lifestyle change and address symptoms of stress, anxiety, and depression.

Yoga/Meditation Consultation

Yoga/meditation lowers stress, depression, and anxiety, improves sleep, memory, physical functioning, and overall quality of life, as well as increasing spiritual well-being. A yoga/ meditation therapist would provide interventions. Cost: \$50 per session.

Nutrition Consultation

A registered dietitian provides personalized nutrition counseling and education to help patients manage side effects and reach their goals during and after cancer treatment. Education emphasizes a whole food, plant-based diet for optimal health.

Music Therapy

Individual music therapy is provided by a board-certified music therapist (MT-BC) and involves engaging in music interactively in a variety of ways, with outcomes including anxiety reduction, fostered well-being and exploring ways of reconnecting to music for daily quality of life. Cost: \$50 per session.

How to Register for our Virtual Group Classes:

1. Call the Integrative Medicine Center at 832-750-3685.
2. All classes are free.
3. Complete e-update *liability waiver and telemedicine consent in MyChart at least 48 hours prior to the scheduled class.

Note: All classes are open to both patients and caregivers.

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Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Yoga for Health 10:30-11:30	Yoga Nidra 10:00-11:00 2nd Tues.	Yoga for Health 10:30-11:30	No Classes	Yoga for Health 10:30-11:30
Connect & Reflect with Music 1:30-2:30	5:00 - 6:00 4th Tues. Pranayama/Breathing 10:00-11:00 1st & 3rd Tues.	Healing Through Writing 2:00-3:00 2nd Wed.		

Group Class Descriptions:

Yoga for Health: Features a gentle form of yoga, including stretching, breathing, relaxation, and meditation techniques. No prior yoga experience is required.

Yoga Nidra/Meditative Relaxation: This is a guided meditation in the supine position to bring you into a state of deep restful awareness. **Offered on Tuesdays!**

Healing Through Writing: Using expressive writing as a tool to identify and process difficult emotions in a supportive environment.

Pranayama/Breathing: The practice of Pranayama involves breath regulation through various breathing exercises. **Offered on Tuesdays!**

Connect & Reflect with Music: A interactive and supportive music group, led by a Board-Certified Music Therapist, using music engagement and conversation to enhance well-being and encourage connectedness. No music experience is required.

Vegan Curry Chickpea Salad Collard Wraps

Total Time: 30 minutes, Servings: 4

Website: <https://www.ambitiouskitchen.com/curry-chickpea-salad-wraps/>

Ingredients:

For the wraps:

- 1 can chickpeas, rinsed and drained
- 1 stalk celery, diced
- 1/2 cup shredded carrot (from 1 medium carrot)
- 1/3 cup tart cherries (or sub chopped Medjool dates or dried cranberries)
- 1/4 cup cilantro
- 2 tablespoons finely diced red onion

For the tahini curry dressing:

- 3 tablespoons tahini
- 1/2 lemon, juiced
- 1 teaspoon pure maple syrup
- 3/4 teaspoon curry powder
- 1 teaspoon fresh grated ginger
- 1/4 teaspoon turmeric
- 1/4 teaspoon garlic powder
- **Optional:** 1/4 teaspoon cayenne for spicy curry flavor!
- 1/2 teaspoon salt, plus more to taste
- Lots of freshly ground black pepper
- 1-3 tablespoons water to thin

For the wraps:

- 4 large collard greens (get as big as you can!) **Optional:** can also use 4 large romain or butter lettuce leaves
- 1/2 cup shredded red cabbage
- 1/4 cup cilantro
- 1/4 cup roasted and salted cashews, roughly chopped



Instructions:

1. Add rinsed and drained chickpeas to a large bowl and use a masher or fork to mash most of the chickpeas. Add in diced celery, shredded carrot, tart cherries, cilantro and diced red onion.
2. In a separate bowl, make the dressing: add tahini, lemon juice, pure maple syrup, curry powder, grated ginger, turmeric, garlic powder, cayenne pepper (if using), salt and pepper. Add 1-3 tablespoons of water to thin until a nice creamy consistency. Mix to combine until a creamy dressing forms. Add more water if necessary. I found that somewhere between 2-3 tablespoons is perfect.
3. Add dressing to the chickpea salad. Stir to combine and coat all the ingredients with dressing. Taste and adjust as necessary. You may want to add more salt and/or pepper.
4. Place your collard green to a cutting board and cut off the large stems at the bottom. After that you'll use a knife to thinly shave the remaining stem down so it's thin and you can easily bend and roll the collard green.
5. Place a collard leaf on a plate and top with 1/4th of the chickpea salad. Top each with shredded red cabbage, 1 tablespoon of roasted cashews, and extra cilantro. Wrap up like a burrito, folding ends in as you go, then cut the wrap in half if desired and enjoy!