

COLNE VALLEY ASTANGA VINYASA YOGA

The principles and approach of Astanga Vinyasa yoga

Astanga Vinyasa yoga was introduced to the UK due to the pioneering work of Derek Ireland (sadly deceased), Radha Warrell, Danny Paradise, David Swenson and John Crawford Scott.

This form of yoga was developed from a series of ancient Sanskrit documents found and deciphered by the famous Indian teacher Krishnamacharya. He had three pupils who developed this original teaching in different ways. One was B.K.S. Iyengar, the founder of 'Iyengar Yoga', the second his son, Desikachar, and the third Pattabhi Jois, who teaches Astanga Vinyasa yoga at his research institute in Mysore. Those following Astanga Vinyasa yoga believe that this system is closest to the system taught by Krishnamacharya.

There are several differences to both mainstream Hatha yoga and Iyengar yoga:

- There are six discrete series of postures, of advancing difficulty, with similar opening and closing sections.
- There is therefore a set routine of postures to be practised every day in the same order, the student being required to attain reasonable proficiency in one series before progressing to the next.
- A special breathing technique, Ujjayi Pranayama, is used throughout, avoiding the use of the abdomen for breathing, concentrating on the chest, and controlled through the back of the throat. This helps to heat up the body and increase flexibility. Every movement such as entry and exit from a posture is linked to the breath.
- A linking sequence, the Vinyasa, which includes the well-known yoga postures, upward and downward dog, is used between postures, thus acting as an all purpose counterpose.
- The approach is said to be 99% physical, and thus students are not expected initially to undertake for instance other breathing exercises (pranayama) and meditation. However, every session ends with a relaxation.
- In small classes the student may be physically assisted by the teacher guiding into postures.

What kind of people do this yoga?

All kinds of people do this yoga. It is much more attractive to men than the style of yoga normally taught in evening classes because of its strongly physical nature, and so classes are usually half and half men and women. Many students come to it after doing other more gentle kinds of yoga, or from Tai Chi or martial arts, or weight training and aerobics. Some use it as 'cross training'.

What are the effects for the student?

Students practicing this yoga regularly experience an increase in suppleness, stamina and strength, and almost all develop a more pleasing body shape. After a while students may experience other more subtle effects.

Is it the same every week?

The primary series, which students practise, is a set routine. Those who practise regularly find this both challenging and satisfying. It can be broken down and practised in smaller chunks. Even those who do not practise every day will find an increase in flexibility and stamina over a period.

For more information about learning this yoga at North Light Gallery, Armitage Bridge, Huddersfield, contact Elisabeth Wilson on 01484 844772, or see www.huddersfieldpilates.co.uk.

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INFORMATION SHEET - ASTANGA VINYASA YOGA

This ancient system of yoga has become increasingly better known in the West in recent years. It is a strenuous, aerobic form of exercise, and thus is not suitable for everyone. There are many other forms of yoga that suit many people; everyone will eventually find their own path.

Warning - You cannot undertake this yoga if you have the following:

- Heart conditions, high blood pressure
- not yet recovered after giving birth
- a recent operation
- diaphragmatic hernia

You should take care if you have any of the following, and should inform your teacher so that he or she can amend postures accordingly:

- Hiatus, inguinal or umbilical hernia
- back trouble (other than mild)
- IUD

You will not be able to do lotus if you have:

- varicose veins

You will not be able to do the inverted (upside down) postures if you have:

- eye or ear problems
- overactive thyroid (applies to shoulder stand only)
- currently menstruating

SAFE PRACTICE AT HOME

- Make sure you practice on a firm, non-slip surface (cork and carpet tiles are OK, other floor coverings generally not). The ideal is a sticky mat, which we provide in class. You can buy similar ones from Boots. Ordinary foam backed yoga mats are not suitable.
- Wear comfortable clothing with a high cotton content. Shorts, leggings and T-shirts are fine. Layers are good.
- Do not practise within two hours of a meal, or half an hour of a drink. Try to empty the bowel before practice. First thing in the morning, allowing half an hour to loosen up from sleep, is ideal.
- Very important - make sure that your room is warm and draught-free. If possible try to have it at 25 degrees when you are starting to learn this yoga. This is to avoid injury. As a precaution you can start practising in a track suit.
- Learn the primary series from the asana sheets. You will be given asana sheets as you need them. When you have learned some of the postures you may find it helpful to use a DVD. However do not copy the jump back till your teacher says it is OK.
- Only practise what you have been taught in class. These demanding postures can be accomplished but you must learn them first from a teacher who can adapt them to your individual ability, and thus avoid any possibility of strain or injury.

- Please try to practise six days a week (or five days when there is a full or new moon) even if only a few postures and the finishing sequence. You should practise each posture 6 times before progressing to the next. Some postures will take much longer to master.
- Never do the series out of sequence, as this could be unsafe. It has been designed to stretch the body progressively.
- Work hard in your yoga, but do not strain. Do not compete with yourself (or others). It is natural for your ability to vary from day to day.
- Wrap up warmly for Savasana (corpse pose), using a tracksuit or blanket. It is very important that you rest for at least ten minutes, preferably longer, after each practice session, to allow your body to set again
- Never practise this yoga more than once a day.
- If you are ill or injure yourself in any way, start again slowly - there is no rush - you have the rest of your life! Do not practise when you have a temperature.
- Sometimes old injuries re-emerge after a while. Do not worry. Consult your teacher about any adaptations you should make to your practice. With time matters will resolve, and you will probably feel stronger in the long run.
- Women should not practise during the first three days of the menstrual cycle. After this, care should be taken, and no inverted (upside down) postures performed, until menses has ceased.

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HEALTH INFORMATION SHEET - ASTANGA VINYASA YOGA

Name in block capitals:.....

fill in if **Address:**.....

you want

details of

workshops **Phone:**.....

1. I acknowledge receipt of the Information Sheet on Astanga Vinyasa Yoga.

2. Delete as applicable

Either: I do not have any of the listed medical conditions

Or: I have ticked any condition of which I am aware

3. I suffer from the following medical condition that is not listed below:

4. I understand that practice will be tailored to the individual capacity of students, and that therefore not all students will practise the same postures. I will not attempt postures which I have not been taught.

Signed.....

Date:.....

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