Comparing Yoga, Exercise, and a Self-Care Book for Chronic Low Back Pain: A Randomized, Controlled Trial

Abstract

Background: Chronic low back pain is a common problem that has only modestly effective treatment options.

Objective: To determine whether yoga is more effective than conventional therapeutic exercise or a self-care book for patients with chronic low back pain.

Design: Randomized, controlled trial.

Setting: A nonprofit, integrated health care system.

Patients: 101 adults with chronic low back pain.

Intervention: 12-week sessions of yoga or conventional therapeutic exercise classes or a self-care book.

Measurements: Primary outcomes were back-related functional status (modified 24-point Roland Disability Scale) and “bothersomeness” of pain (11-point numerical scale). The primary time point was 12 weeks. Clinically significant change was considered to be 2.5 points on the functional status scale and 1.5 points on the bothersomeness scale. Secondary outcomes were days of restricted activity, general health status, and medication use.

Results: After adjustment for baseline values, back-related function in the yoga group was superior to the book and exercise groups at 12 weeks (yoga vs. book: mean difference, −3.4 [95% CI, −5.1 to −1.6] [P < 0.001]; yoga vs. exercise: mean difference, −1.8 [CI, −3.5 to −0.1] [P = 0.034]). No significant differences in symptom bothersomeness were found between any 2 groups at 12 weeks; at 26 weeks, the yoga group was superior to the book group with respect to this measure (mean difference, −2.2 [CI, −3.2 to −1.2]; P < 0.001). At 26 weeks, back-related function in the yoga group was superior to the book group (mean difference, −3.6 [CI, −5.4 to −1.8]; P < 0.001).

Limitations: Participants in this study were followed for only 26 weeks after randomization. Only 1 instructor delivered each intervention.

Conclusions: Yoga was more effective than a self-care book for improving function and reducing chronic low back pain, and the benefits persisted for at least several months.
Comparison of Yoga, Exercise, and Education for the Treatment of Chronic Low Back Pain

Nonpharmacologic Therapies for Low Back Pain: A Systematic Review for an American College of Physicians Clinical Practice Guideline
*Annals of Internal Medicine*; 166 (7): 493-505

Comparison of Yoga, Exercise, and Education for the Treatment of Chronic Low Back Pain
*Annals of Internal Medicine*; 143 (12): I-18

Guideline: USPSTF recommends exercise and multifactorial interventions for fall prevention in older adults
*Annals of Internal Medicine*; 169 (4): JC14

In gluteal tendinopathy, education + exercise improved outcomes vs corticosteroid injection or wait strategy
*Annals of Internal Medicine*; 169 (4): JC22

Low Back Pain
*Annals of Internal Medicine*; 160 (11): ITC6-1

Osteoarthritis
*Annals of Internal Medicine*; 147 (3): ITC8-1

Back Pain
Rheumatology
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Echocardiography 2019.

Spinal Cord Stimulation for Restless Legs Syndrome: Case Series and Mechanistic Hypothesis.
Stereotact Funct Neurosurg 2019.

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Background: Chronic low back pain is a common problem lacking highly effective treatment options. Small trials suggest that yoga may have benefits for this condition. This trial was designed to determine whether yoga is more effective than conventional stretching exercises or a self-care book for primary care patients with chronic low back pain. Methods: A total of 228 adults with chronic low back pain were randomized to 12 weekly classes of yoga (92 patients) or conventional stretching exercises (91 patients) or a self-care book (45 patients). Back-related functional status (modified Roland D...