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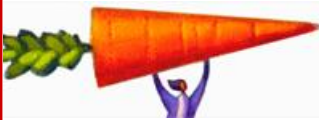


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Downward Dog Fights Eating Disorders

Posted by **MAIA SZALAVITZ** Wednesday, November 4, 2009 at 3:38 pm

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Yoga for teens could be more than a spiritual and physical boost—a new randomized controlled trial suggests that it may help those with anorexia, bulimia and other eating disorders.

The [study](#) included 50 adolescents aged 11-16, the vast majority of whom were girls. They were seriously ill. Nearly half had previously been hospitalized because of their eating disorder—at the time of the study, they were being treated at an outpatient clinic at Seattle Children's hospital.

55% were suffering from anorexia, 17% had bulimia and the rest had been diagnosed with "eating disorder-not otherwise specified," a condition in which people have some, but not all of the symptoms of anorexia or bulimia or both.

The study was led by T. Rain Carei Ph.D. of Seattle Children's Hospital and published in the Journal of Adolescent Health.

Teens were randomized to receive either usual treatment at the clinic—or that treatment plus two hours a week of yoga classes, conducted by an instructor certified in Viniyoga by the Yoga Alliance. The study period lasted eight weeks.

While controls showed improvement on tests of eating disordered behaviors and thinking during treatment, these had fallen back to their previous levels when they were followed up a month afterwards.

But in the yoga, while improvement started slowly, a month later, these teens were doing much better than they had been at the start of treatment and had lower scores on these measures as a result. Yoga had no effect on weight, which was reassuring because underweight subjects needed to gain to recover and weight loss could cause more harm.

The researchers suspect that yoga may help by reducing the obsessive concern about weight associated with eating disorders. They write, "Food preoccupation may be reduced by focusing attention on yoga poses." Some subjects even expressed this idea directly to the researchers, saying "This is the only hour in my week when I don't think about my weight."

If a larger study confirms these findings, a prescription for the child's pose and others could be in the future for teens with eating disorders. [For more on yoga and eating, see [here](#) (scroll down)]

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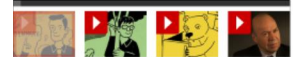
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