

Yoga4Health

Course Manual for Patients

Thank you for joining the Yoga4Health 10-Week Yoga Programme. Created by expert yoga teachers and researchers, this course is specifically designed to help you enhance your health and wellbeing. You will be guided by an expert teacher through 10 classes which can be done on a chair or on a yoga mat. During the course you will develop your own personalised yoga toolkit of practices to support your health and wellbeing.

WHAT IS YOGA?

Yoga is an ancient mind-body system developed in India. Yoga ranges from classes focused on physical yoga postures, to those that place their main emphasis on mindfulness and meditation. The Yoga In Healthcare Alliance was commissioned by the NHS in 2016 to develop an evidence-based social prescribing yoga programme – **Yoga4Health** – because healthcare professionals recognised that yoga could make a big difference to the health and wellbeing of their patients.

BEING SAFE IN CLASS

Your Yoga4Health teacher will have gathered medical and other information during induction so that the yoga practice you are offered is safe and within your capabilities. If you are not physically able to work on the floor you will be able to do the whole class from a chair, or with the support of a chair. You can mix chair and mat practice as you wish. All physical practice is gentle and led by the breath.

Your Yoga4Health teacher will create a safe space for you, free from discrimination and judgement. In line with YIHA policies, our programmes are inclusive, and everyone is welcome.

You will be more comfortable if you avoid eating a large meal close to the start of your class. Any loose and comfortable clothing can be worn. You will usually take off your shoes for the class, unless you need them on for medical reasons. Please be kind and considerate in class, and abide by our ground rules.

STRUCTURE OF EACH CLASS - All Yoga4Health classes begin in a chair

- A short introduction, establishing the theme for that week's class
- Guided breathing practice

- Opening chair sequence of breath-led movements
- Chair or mat-based practices
- Relaxation
- Guided breathing to support home practice
- Group sharing of experiences of the class

HOME PRACTICE/GETTING THE MOST OUT OF Yoga4Health

The aim of the Yoga4Health programme is to give you the skills, knowledge and confidence to use yoga practice to support your health and wellbeing. For this reason, we strongly encourage you to have a daily home practice of the yoga techniques you learn. Many participants find the breathing practices to be the most useful part of the course. Home practice can be for as little as 5-10 minutes per day and can fit in with your schedule. We know that people who practice regularly gain the most benefit from the Yoga4Health programme.

We also invite you to reflect on what you would like to achieve from participating in the course. This could be anything from better physical health, more mobility, or being able to better manage stress or anxiety. It is even better if you can identify a specific goal that will really help to motivate you to attend and practice at home. One NHS patient who came to us wanted to feel strong enough to make a long journey overseas to visit her daughter. Another wanted to improve his balance and mobility and feel able to move through life more confidently. Both achieved their goals.

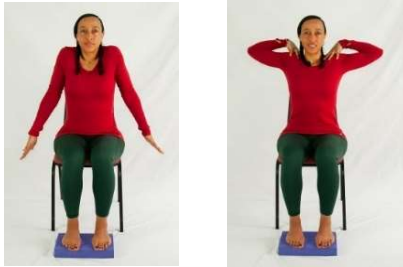
Towards the end of this manual, there are links to home practice resources, and recordings of all 10 Yoga4Health classes which you can use if you miss a session or want to repeat a particular week. Below is a visual guide to the protocol of physical practices which are the same every week and so will quickly become very familiar to you.

Yoga4Health Protocol Chair & Mat

	
Introduction/Welcome/ Psychoeducation	Settling & breathing practice

Initial Seated Sequence

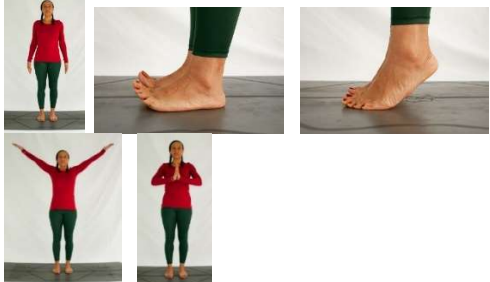
			
Breath and movement. Inhale arms wide, exhale close		Inhale, raise arms, palms up; turn palms; exhale, lower arms	

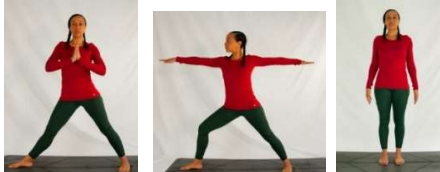
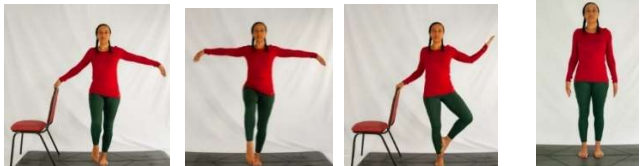
	
Shoulder mobilising	Side stretches
	
Forward fold/back stretch	

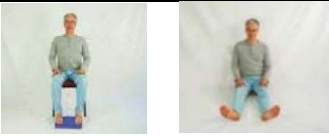
Physical Practice Continues in a Chair or on a Yoga Mat

NOTE: If you are working on a mat, support the back of the head with a cushion or yoga block when lying on your back. If you do any kneeling practices a thick folded blanket or cushion should be placed under the knees. For those with knee problems, use the back of the chair for non-weight-bearing versions of modified practice. Your teacher will guide you.

Mat Practice	Chair Practice
	
Transition to the floor. Take a few breaths in this new position	Sit quietly with your breath
	
Inhale slow and low, and exhale navel to spine to activate the core. Feel the downward movement with your palms	Inhale low and slow, and exhale navel to spine to activate the core. Feel the inward movement with your palms
	
Draw thigh in during exhale x3. Repeat L side. Progression: Straighten one leg x3 R/L. Knees to chest and rock to counterpose	Hold shin or thigh (or use belt) and draw in thigh on exhale x3-5 R/L. Fold forwards to release
	
Inhale, full body stretch, engaging as many muscles as possible. Exhale, relax completely x5	Inhale, reach up and engage as many muscles as possible. Exhale, relax x5
	
Hip opener (gentle rotations)	Hip opener (hold and rotate each leg in turn)
	
Backbend: dynamic, static (nothing under head); counterpose	Dynamic backbend. Inhale open chest, exhale release back to neutral x5. Counterpose with forward fold

	
Dynamic and held supine twist. Arms away from the body at shoulder height or lower (or bend elbows as shown here). Shoulders back and down, palms up. Feet hip width apart. Inhale centre and exhale x3 into twist R/L sides then hold	Dynamic and held twist. Inhale, palms together, lengthen up. Exhale, turn shoulders and head in opposite directions. Inhale to centre and exhale x3 into twist R/L sides then hold
	
Cross-crawl and hamstring stretch. Inhale L arm, R leg. Exhale semi-supine. Inhale R arm, L leg. Exhale semi-supine x3 rounds	Cross-crawl and hamstring stretch. Inhale L arm/R leg. Exhale release. Inhale R arm, L leg. Exhale release x3 rounds
	
Dynamic hamstring stretch with belt. Bend R leg on inhale and stretch on exhale x5. After last exhale hold static stretch R side x5. Relax and observe effects of stretch BEFORE repeating L side.	Dynamic hamstring stretch with belt. Bend R leg on inhale and stretch on exhale x5. After last exhale, hold static stretch R side x5. Relax and observe effects of stretch, BEFORE repeating L side.
	
Back strengthener. Inhale, raise chest Exhale lower x 3-5 Glute strengthener. Inhale, raise straight leg.... Exhale, lower x 3-5	Back strengthening. Lean forward onto the thighs and use back muscles to arch and release the spine with the breath x3 breaths. Glute strengthening. Inhale contract glutes and exhale release.
	
Dynamic Cat – inhale back bend, exhale back arch x5	Cat pose. From a chair, inhale and open the spine, sliding the hands towards hips. Exhale, round the back and engage the abdominals, sliding hands towards knees. x5.
	
Dynamic downward facing dog. From all fours (knees padded) tuck toes and inhale to lengthen spine. Exhale, lift the hips high, stay on toes/balls of feet, knees bent. Inhale, hold position and lengthen spine further. Exhale, release x3-5. Chair for high blood pressure	Dynamic downward facing dog. Inhale, lift both arms and right leg, exhale release. Inhale both arms and left leg, exhale release. Repeat up to x5.
	
Stand in mountain pose, feet hip-width apart. Feel the touch of the feet on the ground. Then extend arms to the sides and sweep up on inhale, draw palms down past the heart on exhale. Repeat x5, lifting toes or heels	Same as left. Then extend arms to the sides and sweep up on inhale, draw palms down past the heart on exhale. Repeat x5, lifting toes on inhale and relaxing them on exhale and lifting the heels on inhale and releasing them on exhale

Practice 2 – 5 x Sun Salutations 	Practice 2 – 5 x Sun Salutations 
Sun salutation. A dynamic series of interwoven yoga postures that stretch the body and support cardio-vascular, respiratory, and lymphatic health. Each pose is done either on an inhale or exhale, no pose is held. Repeat up to 5 rounds.	Sun Salutations. A dynamic series of interwoven yoga postures that stretch the body and support cardio-vascular, respiratory, and lymphatic health. Each pose is done either on an inhale or exhale, no pose is held. Repeat up to 5 rounds.
	
Dynamic Warrior 1. Keep feet hip width apart and back foot hardly turned out. Inhale to bend knee into lunge and take arms wide, shoulders released. Exhale, return palms together and straighten leg x5 R/L sides	Dynamic Warrior 1. Take the left leg to the side and bring palms together in front of the heart. Inhale open arms, exhale palms together x5 R/L sides. If you can stand, use the back of the chair, feet hip width apart and hips facing forwards. Inhale bend the leg, exhale straighten x5 R/L sides
	
Dynamic Warrior 2. Step feet apart a comfortable distance and hold hips steady. Turn the R leg and foot out 70-80 degrees (according to your own hip range of motion). Palms together. Inhale, turn head, extend arms and lunge R leg (knee tracks second toe). Exhale, return to starting position x5 R/L sides	Dynamic Warrior 2. Open right hip and turn out left leg slightly. Palms together. Inhale, turn head, extend arms. Exhale return to starting position x5 R/L sides. Alternatively, with chair support, extend arm and bend knee on inhale. Straighten leg and draw in arm on exhale x5 R/L sides.
	
Dynamic Heron balance. Start in mountain pose. Inhale, lift the arms come onto the toes of the R foot. Exhale, release down. Switch legs with each breath and progress to lifting and lowering the foot to and from the mat. If you have balance issues use a chair or wall for support x5 R/L sides. Progression to simple tree pose Weeks 8-9-10	Dynamic heron pose. Only work in a chair if SU is unable to stand. Inhale, raise soft arms to the sides and lift right leg. Exhale, lower. Continue with alternate legs and both arms. Using a chair or wall for stability. Progression to simple tree pose Weeks 8-9-10
	
Mild inversion. Rest the legs on the chair, yoga block under the hips and head supported on a blanket. 10 breaths	Mild inversion. Sit comfortably in the chair. If possible, raise the legs and rest on another chair. Progression: If coming to the floor for relaxation then rest legs on chair as shown opposite. 10 breaths

	
Relaxation. Find a comfortable pose using any available supports if needed, or take semi-supine with knees together. Listen to a recorded Yoga4Health relaxation (10 available to download)	Relaxation. If your chair has sides you may be able to safely relax. If not, sit against a wall in case you fall asleep and fall off the chair. If remaining in a chair without sides, treat relaxation as a guided meditation. Listen to a recorded Yoga4Health relaxation (10 available to download)

Final Breathing Practice in chair

The week's breathing technique is further established by around 5 minutes of practice



WEEKLY THEMES

Each week of the Yoga4Health programme has a theme, catchphrase, and breathing practice

Week 1: Body and breath awareness <i>Notice where you feel your breath</i> Low, slow, abdominal breathing	Week 6: Spaciousness <i>Notice the space in your shoulders</i> Inhale ocean breath, exhale long ocean breath, pause/space
Week 2: Grounding <i>Feel the touch of the body on the ground</i> Breathing up and down from the ground	Week 7: Being embodied <i>Notice the sensations in the body</i> Inhale ocean breath, exhale ocean breath, pause/space
Week 3: Grounding <i>Inhale up from the ground, exhale back down to the ground</i> Ocean breathing on the exhale	Week 8: Balance <i>Breathe with the chimes</i> Equal Breathing. Inhaling for 6 seconds and exhaling for 6 seconds (with or without audio track)
Week 4: Grounding <i>Finding stability and steadiness</i> Ocean breathing on inhale and long exhale	Week 9: Change <i>Notice the beginning/end of the inhale & exhale.</i> <i>Notice arising and passing sensations</i> Equal Breathing. Inhaling for 6 seconds and exhaling for 6 seconds (with or without audio track)
Week 5: Spaciousness <i>Notice space in body and breath</i> Inhale ocean breath, exhale long ocean breath, pause/space	Week 10: Connection <i>We are all connected by breath</i> Equal Breathing. Inhaling for 6 seconds and exhaling for 6 seconds (with or without audio track)

RESOURCES

You are able to access home practice videos for chair or mat practice via the Yoga In Healthcare Alliance website: <https://www.yogainhealthcarealliance.com/resources/>

There are also recordings of all 10 classes of the Yoga4Health programme for home practice or to catch up on missed sessions or repeat them: -

Week 1: https://vimeo.com/user141096188/yoga4health-week-1?share=copy	Week 6: https://vimeo.com/user141096188/yoga4health-week-6?share=copy
Week 2: https://vimeo.com/user141096188/yoga4health-week-2?share=copy	Week 7: https://vimeo.com/user141096188/yoga4health-week-7?share=copy

week-2?share=copy Week 3: https://vimeo.com/user141096188/yoga4health-week-3?share=copy Week 4: https://vimeo.com/user141096188/yoga4health-week-4?share=copy Week 5: https://vimeo.com/user141096188/yoga4health-week-5?share=copy	Week 8: https://vimeo.com/user141096188/yoga4health-week-8?share=copy Week 9: https://vimeo.com/user141096188/yoga4health-week-9?share=copy Week 10: https://vimeo.com/user141096188/yoga4health-week-10?share=copy
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Yoga4Health Home Practice Record

You can use this form to record which days you practice yoga at home. Simply tick the days on which you practice yoga and hand this form in at the Week 10 class or scan and email to your teacher

WEEK	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							
7							
8							
9							
10	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Personal notes on home practice Add your thoughts and reflections on how you feel after each practice. Journalling in this way can help you understand more deeply how yoga practice supports your health and wellbeing.

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Add more rows as needed or use your own journal/notebook.

Paul Fox January 2025