

Yoga maintains health, supports stress-free life

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The COVID-19 pandemic has made our lives horrible. We can't go out freely, exercise at the gym or play our favorite sports or games. Staying at home for the whole day is creating a lot of stress. Under these circumstances, how can we reduce stress and stay fit and healthy?

Try yoga, an ancient Indian practice that can boost your immune system while supporting a productive and stress-free life. It can also prevent many diseases through regular practice.

The unique thing about yoga is that it can be done anywhere: at home, at the office, in a park or at a gym. It can be practiced not only during the COVID-19 pandemic, but also throughout our entire lives.

What is yoga?

The word "yoga" comes from the ancient language of Sanskrit and means union of mind and body. Yoga, which combines physical, mental and spiritual practices, is suitable for all kinds of people.

"Whether you are young or old, overweight or fit, yoga has the power to calm the mind and strengthen the body. Don't be intimidated by yoga terminology, fancy yoga studios and complicated poses. Yoga is for everyone," Kelly Couturier wrote in a 2016 primer for yoga in *The New York Times*.

Three things

Yoga consists of three main elements. The first is *asanas*, which are poses that will improve and strengthen physical balance as well as flexibility. The second is *pranayama*, or breathing exercises that improve your lung capacity. And the last is meditation, which trains our mind to control our feelings and thoughts. Meditation also improves concentration.

Yoga was codified in India in the 2nd century BCE *yoga sutras* (yoga principles) by the famous Indian saint Patanjali, who is regarded as the father of yoga. But the practice has become popular around the world over the last three decades, including in Indonesia.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, a yoga practitioner, made efforts to globalize yoga in 2014. He asked the United Nations to celebrate yoga every year.

"Yoga is an invaluable gift of India's ancient tradition. It embodies unity of mind and body; thought and action; restraint and fulfillment; harmony between man and nature; a holistic approach to health and wellbeing. It is not about exercise, but to discover the sense of oneness with yourself, the world and nature. By changing our lifestyle and creating consciousness, it can help in wellbeing," Modi said at the UN.

International Day of Yoga

The UN General Assembly in 2014 declared June 21 as the International Day of Yoga.

Thousands of yoga enthusiasts,



Courtesy of Indian Embassy Jakarta

Good for health: Yoga guru Anjasmara Prasetya (center) from the Association of Yoga Practitioners in Indonesia (PPYNI), Art of Living, Indonesia's yoga gurus, Sita (left) and Yazmeen, conduct the common yoga protocol during the celebration of the sixth International Day of Yoga at the Indian Embassy auditorium in Jakarta on June 21. Yoga is suggested to maintain physical and mental health.

practitioners and gurus celebrated the 6th International Day of Yoga this year at the Indian Embassy in Jakarta and virtually at 115 other locations across Indonesia. The Indian Consulate in Medan also joined in the celebration.

Indian Ambassador to Indonesia Pradeep Kumar Rawat and chairman Hayono Isman of the Indonesian Federation of Sports Associations and Recreational Activity (FORMI) delivered opening remarks on yoga in Indonesia. The event was also attended by members of the Association of Yoga Practitioners in Indonesia (PPYNI), which is part of FORMI.

In his address, ambassador Rawat emphasized the importance of *pranayama* in boosting our immune system and breathing.

"Through *pranayama*, we can control and regulate [our] breathing," Rawat said.

Hayono, who is a former youth and sports minister, said that yoga had become very popular in Indonesia. "Yoga is a form of meditation and it is also a type of sports. It keeps us healthy," he said.

The Indian Embassy said in a press release that it had organized several events to mark the 6th International Day of Yoga in Indonesia.

On June 12, the embassy held a video conference during which the Indian ambassador interacted with hundreds of yoga practitioners in Indonesia. On June 14, the embassy held a webinar on Ayurveda, an Indian alternative medicine, and how it can be used to curb COVID-19 infection. There was also an online quiz on yoga.

The International Day of Yoga celebrations were scaled down amid the pandemic, but enthusiasm remained high among yoga lovers.

"I love yoga and I have been practicing it for more than 10 years. I have never missed an International Day of Yoga celebration. This time, I celebrated it at home while watching the celebrations on YouTube," Santhi

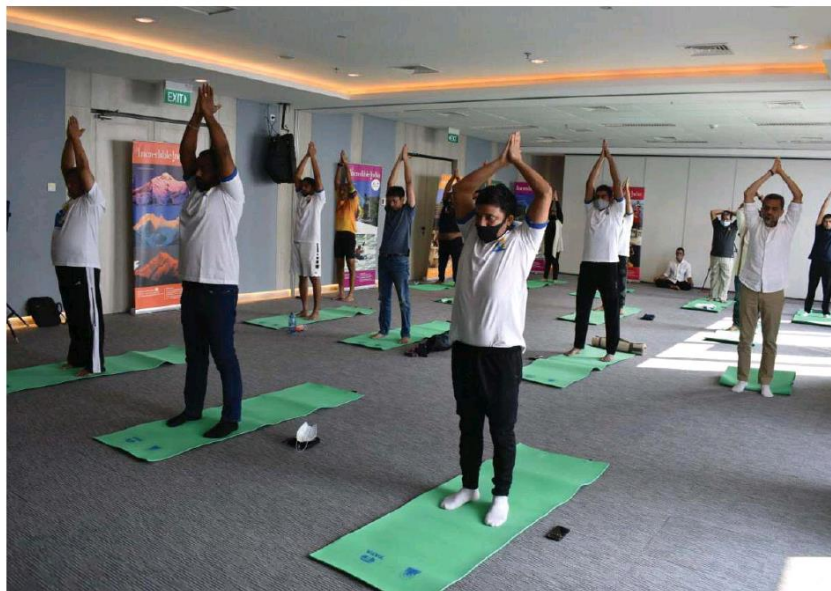
Nugroho, a private employee in West Jakarta, told *The Jakarta Post* on Tuesday.

In fact, "Yoga from Home" is the theme for this year's celebration. Doing yoga at home is not difficult.

"I have been practicing yoga every day at home during the COVID-19 pandemic. Before the pandemic, I used to do yoga at my office. Sometimes, I missed a yoga session due to work. Now, I never miss [a session]," Ridwan Hamid, a private employee in Central Jakarta, told the *Post*.

Yoga has many benefits, both health and mental. For example, according to yoga gurus and medical doctors, yoga can help cure diabetes, heart disease, hypertension, lung diseases and back pain, treat depression, anxiety and insomnia, and improve mental acuity and memory.

Yoga involves 99 percent practice and 1 percent theory. The more you practice yoga, the more benefits you gain. Stay healthy by practicing yoga!



Courtesy of Indian Embassy Jakarta

Special yoga: Participants do special yoga during a one-hour session organized by the Isha Foundation at the Indian Embassy in Jakarta on June 20. This event was organized as part of the celebration of the sixth International Day of Yoga, which fell on June 21.



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