



# Yoga in VA -Fact Sheet

Integrative Health Coordinating Center-  
VHA Office of Patient Centered Care & Cultural Transformation

## Definitions

**Yoga** is a mind and body practice with origins in ancient Indian philosophy. The various styles of yoga typically combine physical postures, breathing techniques, and meditation or relaxation.

## Background and Policy on in VA

Yoga is one of the evidence-based complementary and integrative health (CIH) approaches within the VHA Whole Health System of care included in the Veteran's medical benefits package when deemed clinically necessary by their care team per VHA Directive 1137 – Provision of Complementary and Integrative Health, published in May 2017. Based on literature review these approaches were found to be safe and have sufficient evidence of benefit to be recommended as appropriate components of care for the Veteran population.

## Yoga Safety and Effectiveness

An evidence map of yoga for high-impact conditions affecting Veterans was developed by the VA's Health Services Research & Development office. Conditions with evidence of positive effect include nonspecific chronic low back pain. Conditions with evidence of potentially positive effect include depressive disorders, anxiety, and insomnia.

<https://www.hsrp.research.va.gov/publications/esp/yoga.cfm>

Yoga has been recommended as a first line treatment for acute and chronic low back pain in the clinical practice guidelines developed by the American College of Physicians. <https://annals.org/aim/fullarticle/2603228/noninvasive-treatments-acute-subacute-chronic-low-back-pain-clinical-practice>

## Occupational Guidance

- Minimum Standards for Yoga Instructors to lead yoga for well-being classes in VA include a recommended minimum 200 Hour level Yoga Alliance Registered Yoga Teacher (RYT) or equivalent, 500 Hour level RYT or equivalent, OR Certified Yoga Therapist, regardless of clinical background.
- Employees providing yoga must ensure yoga is in their scope of practice and that they meet the minimum standards for providing yoga.
- At some facilities yoga is provided by qualified volunteers or community partners. Learn how to volunteer for VA here: <https://www.volunteer.va.gov/>



## TeleWholeHealth

A number of facilities are expanding access to yoga and other CIH services using VA's Telehealth technology.

## Online Resources

Handouts and Experiential Videos <https://www.va.gov/WHOLEHEALTH/circle-of-health/moving-body.asp>

VHA Directive 1137: Provision of Complementary and Integrative Health:  
[https://www.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub\\_ID=5401](https://www.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub_ID=5401)