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## A pilot study of yoga for breast cancer survivors: physical and psychological benefits.

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### Abstract

**BACKGROUND:** Physical activity provides a number of physical and psychological benefits to cancer survivors, including lessening the impact of detrimental cancer-related symptoms and treatment side-effects (e.g. fatigue, nausea), and improving overall well-being and quality of life. The purpose of the present pilot study was to examine the physical and psychological benefits afforded by a 7-week yoga program for cancer survivors.

**METHOD:** Eligible participants (per-screened with PAR-Q/PAR-MED-X) were randomly assigned to either the intervention (n=20) or control group (n=18). All participants completed pre- and post-testing assessments immediately before and after the yoga program, respectively.

**RESULTS:** The yoga program participants (M age=51.18 (10.33); 92% female) included primarily breast cancer survivors, on average 55.95 (54.39) months post-diagnosis. Significant differences between the intervention and the control group at post-intervention were seen only in psychosocial (i.e. global quality of life, emotional function, and diarrhea) variables (all p's <0.05). There were also trends for group differences, in the hypothesized directions, for the psychosocial variables of emotional irritability, gastrointestinal symptoms, cognitive disorganization, mood disturbance, tension, depression, and confusion (all p's <0.10). Finally, there were also significant improvements in both the program participants and the controls from pre- to post-intervention on a number of physical fitness variables.

**CONCLUSIONS:** These initial findings suggest that yoga has significant potential and should be further explored as a beneficial physical activity option for cancer survivors. Future research might attempt to include a broader range of participants (e.g. other types of cancer diagnoses, male subjects), a larger sample size, and a longer program duration in an RCT.

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