

Yoga may give lung cancer patients, caregivers a boost

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(HealthDay)—For advanced lung cancer patients, yoga appears to help

improve their overall physical function, stamina and mental health.

And it appears to give their caregivers a boost, as well.

The findings stem from a small study of 26 [patients](#) and caregivers. The study participants, most of whom were in their 60s, took part in an average of 12 [yoga](#) sessions. The focus was on [breathing exercises](#), physical postures and meditation.

"It is never too late to engage in [exercise](#), and we know from earlier studies that people can exercise while being treated with chemotherapy or radiation," said study lead author Kathrin Milbury.

"Caregivers sometimes have more anxiety and sleeping problems than patients. Therefore, we thought that having the patient and [caregiver](#) go through yoga instruction together would be beneficial for both partners," she explained.

Milbury is an assistant professor in palliative care and rehabilitation medicine at the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston.

The researchers chose yoga because it is a low-impact form of exercise that allows partners to participate. It's also easily modified to meet individual patients' needs.

The poses studied included ones known as chest openers, which stretch the chest area and emphasize deep breathing. That was important because people with lung [cancer](#) often have trouble breathing.

Compared to a control group of patients who did not practice yoga, those who did had higher scores on a six-minute walking test and more stamina. Their caregivers also reported less fatigue and better stamina

while working.

Milbury and her colleagues presented their findings at the recent Palliative and Supportive Care Oncology Symposium in San Diego.

The study authors said they're not claiming that yoga is better for advanced [lung cancer patients](#) than other exercise, including swimming or hiking.

"We tried to look at one way to boost patient and caregiver well-being, both physically and mentally, as a means to enhance supportive care," Milbury said in a symposium news release.

She said the researchers were "thrilled" that many participants said they would continue to practice yoga on their own.

The U.S. National Institutes of Health funded the study. Research presented at medical meetings should be considered preliminary until published in a peer-reviewed journal.

More information: Learn more about yoga from the [U.S. National Library of Medicine](#).

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