

Don't sweat it: Bikram yoga is no more effective than yoga practiced at room temperature

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Bikram yoga, a hot yoga style, is no more effective at improving health than the same yoga postures at room temperature - that's what research published in *Experimental Physiology* and carried out by Texas State University and the University of Texas at Austin, USA, has found.

Bikram [yoga](#) is popular worldwide and involves 26 poses performed in a room heated to 40°C. Despite its popularity, little is known about the [health benefits](#) associated with it and even less is known about the stipulation that it is carried out in a hot environment. This is the first publication to date to isolate the effects of the heat in Bikram yoga, and it found that the heated environment did not play a role in causing improvements in vascular health.

The research showed that Bikram yoga can reduce changes in the lining of [blood vessels](#) that are involved in the development and progression of heart disease. It also found that it can possibly delay the progression of atherosclerosis, which is a disease in which plaque builds up inside arteries and can cause heart attack or stroke. However, crucially, it found that it is not necessary for the yoga to be performed at a hot temperature with the effects also being seen at room temperature.

80 participants were enrolled and randomised to one of three study groups after preliminary screening. In addition to the heated and [room temperature](#) yoga groups, a control group was also included to account for the effect of time on our primary results. The intervention lasted for 12 weeks and participants were asked to attend 3 Bikram yoga classes per week.

Stacy D Hunter, corresponding author said, 'The new finding from this investigation was that the heated practice environment did not seem to play a role in eliciting improvements in [vascular health](#) with Bikram yoga. This is the first publication to date to show a beneficial effect of the practice in the absence of the heat.'

More information: Stacy D. Hunter et al, Effects of yoga interventions practiced in heated and thermoneutral conditions on endothelium-dependent vasodilation: The Bikram yoga heart study, *Experimental Physiology* (2018). [DOI: 10.1113/EP086725](https://doi.org/10.1113/EP086725)

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