

# htthink!

ONE OF THE BIGGEST BENEFITS OF FUSION YOGA IS THAT IT COMBINES TECHNIQUES TO TARGET MAJOR MUSCLE GROUPS



Yoga trainers Swati Kain and Neha Bajaj practise fusion asanas at Yog Essence Yoga Studio in Gurgaon.

HT PHOTOS: PARVEEN KUMAR

## DO THE TWIST

Don't have the patience for traditional yoga? Try fusion yoga instead. It combines the flexibility training of the ancient discipline with core and strength-training exercises like pilates, kickboxing and even dance

### Rhythma Kaul

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For the generation that is too fast-paced for traditional yoga but also wants to enjoy its benefits, fusion yoga is turning out to be the fitness mantra.

As the name suggests, fusion yoga or power yoga is a mash-up of controlled yoga postures and a high-intensity cardio workout that strengthens your core, increases flexibility and lowers your resting heart rate.

"One thing I felt conventional yoga was lacking was the development of core strength. The focus of pure yoga is on flexibility, while for me working on stamina and strength was equally important," says Swati Kain, yoga and pilates instructor at YogEssence Yoga Studio, Gurgaon.

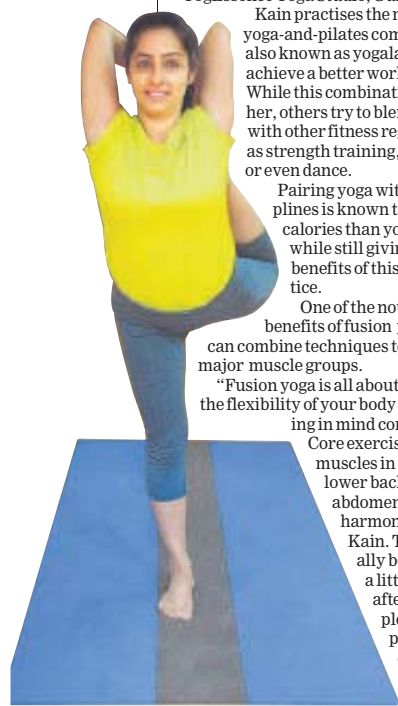
Kain practises the most popular yoga-and-pilates combination, also known as yugalates, to achieve a better workout balance. While this combination works for her, others try to blend yoga poses with other fitness regimens such as strength training, kickboxing or even dance.

Pairing yoga with other disciplines is known to burn more calories than yoga alone, while still giving you the benefits of this ancient practice.

One of the noteworthy benefits of fusion yoga is that it can combine techniques to target major muscle groups.

"Fusion yoga is all about working on the flexibility of your body while keeping in mind core strength.

Core exercises train the muscles in your pelvis, lower back, hips and abdomen to work in harmony," says Kain. The form usually begins with a little warm-up, after which people graduate to performing cardio or strength training



### FUSION YOGA WITH HT

Watch and learn fusion yoga with Swati Kain at <https://t.co/Zn1NBic2PM>

Yoga and pilates instructor Swati Kain's energising videos help lower stress, improve mood and tone, strengthen muscles, lose weight, raise lung capacity and boost heart health – all in two minutes.



#### HOW IT CAN HELP YOU

- It focuses on posture and alignment which improves balance and stability, whether on the playing field or daily activities
- It increases flexibility in a safer way
- It keeps the torso toned and strong
- It improves stamina and lowers your resting heart rate to keep personal energy levels high through the day

If you are starting out with yoga, especially if you're over 35, get a physical exam first, to identify underlying problems that could be made worse. Also, if you have been leading a sedentary life and suddenly decide to take up yoga, seek the help of an instructor.

DR PUSHPINDER BAJAJ, Delhi-based sports medicine expert

and then later to traditional yoga forms such as breathing exercises, balance and flexibility training.

However, those practising traditional yoga believe the aim of yoga is not just about achieving a healthy body, but a healthy mind and soul too.

"These variations are popular among the younger generation that wants to achieve quick results. These work at the physical level so they become more active at the physical level," says PC Kapoor, director of south Delhi's Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centre.

"The emphasis is on building muscles and the mind is left uncontrolled. If you ask me why people like this kind of fusion

workout, I would say it's because the mind likes it. We are controlled by our mind, which keeps seeking variety. People want quick response and traditional yoga asks for time and patience."

Meanwhile, whichever form of yoga one may choose, experts offer a word of caution to help avoid injuries.

Since yoga is a person-specific form, experts say it is important to remember that a set of asanas that works for one person may not suit another.

"Each body has its own limitations and it can lead to injuries if one tries to compete with another. Neck, lower back and shoulder injuries are commonly seen among people trying to push themselves too hard," says Kapoor.

The key is to listen to your body and take precautions.

"Yoga is very effective but it is not meant for everybody. If you are starting out with yoga, especially if you are over 35, then you should get a thorough physical examination first, to identify underlying problems that could be made worse," says Dr Pushpinder Bajaj, a Delhi-based sports medicine expert.

"Also, if people who have been leading a sedentary life for years suddenly decide to begin practising yoga, it can create problems like pulling of nerves etc. Always start with an instructor, and preferably with gradual one-on-one sessions," Dr Bajaj adds.

## DIWALI AIR POLLUTION: A SURVIVAL GUIDE

### HEALTH WISE



SANCHITA SHARMA

Since we can't stop breathing or tide over bad air days by sitting cocooned in air-purified homes waiting for the government to come up with yet another hare-brained scheme (Giant air-purifiers at traffic intersections? Seriously?), we must adopt simple strategies to cope. Here are a few...

### YOUR COMMUTE

As pollution peaks across India in winter, start your day by going online to check pollution levels in your neighbourhood and city before you step out.

Several government and independent initiatives, including the Hindustan Times Air Quality Index, give round-the-clock colour-coded information on fluctuating air pollution levels that can help you choose when and where to step out, to lower exposure to air toxins.

Avoid non-essential travel during peak hours and use public transport as far as possible. Even in neighbourhoods with low to moderate pollution, vehicular exhaust raises air pollution levels up to 1 km on either side of the road during peak hours.

Drive with your windows rolled up or cover your mouth and nostrils with an N95 respirator, which filters out at least 95% of fine airborne particles.

Fine pollutants pass through a normal surgical masks and cloth, but in the absence of an N95, any form of protection over your nose and mouth is better than none.

### OUTDOOR ACTIVITY

Don't exercise (walk, cycle or run) or play outdoors when pollution levels are high, which is usually in the morning.

The health benefits of exercising outweigh the hazards of pollution only if you choose to exercise when the air quality index reading is lower than 160 microgram/m<sup>3</sup>, which is the tipping point after which any time spent exercising does more damage than good to your health.

A study published in the journal Preventive Medicine last year showed that in the average polluted city (44 microgram/m<sup>3</sup> to 153 microgram/m<sup>3</sup>), physical exercise will remain beneficial for up to seven hours a day on a bicycle or walking for 16 hours. But in the most polluted cities such as Delhi, the tipping point when exercising began to hurt more than benefit started

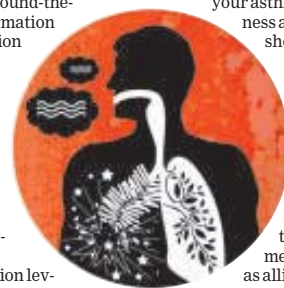


ILLUSTRATION: ABHIMANYU

### FOODS THAT BEAT POLLUTION

Foods that fight inflammation and boost immunity do their bit in keeping your airways from reacting to the air toxins. Garlic contains medicinal compounds such as allicin and sulphydryl, which give it its pungent smell and also make it a powerful immune

booster and antimicrobial that fights infections. Having fresh garlic or garlic supplements protects against infection.

Spring onions (scallions), which belongs to the garlic family, are also rich in organic sulfur compounds, as well as in Vitamins B and C, and trace minerals that fight infection and lower inflammation.

Air pollution lowers the body's reserves of Vitamin E, a fat-soluble antioxidant found in vegetable oils, nuts, and green leafy vegetables that protect cells against the effects of free radicals, which are potentially damaging by-products of the body's metabolism.

Free radicals can cause cell damage that raises the risk of heart disease, cancers and premature ageing.

Vitamin C boosts resistance to infections, raises iron absorption and helps heal wounds. Amla, guava, oranges, lemons, limes, green vegetables and melons are all rich sources of Vitamin C.

One small amla contains more than 300 mg of Vitamin C, compared to just 200 mg in a whole guava, 70 mg in one orange, and 100 mg in one bell pepper. All bell peppers are high in Vitamin C, but yellow peppers have the highest ratio, followed by red.

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## A COTTAGE OF LEAVES BY THE LOTUS LAKE

### SHE BABA



RENUKA NARAYANAN

Happy Dipavali, dear HT readers. Peace, health and happiness to you. This is our calendar cue to celebrate the simple human joys, especially the emotional satisfaction of 'home' and 'family'. Whether we're wall-to-wall with people or heating a solitary dinner, the Ramayana, which is the primary reason for Dipavali, takes us into a very pretty scene that's also very heartwarming.

It's in the Valmiki Ramayana 3:15 (Aranya Kand, Sarga 15) that we get to see the making of a very special home. The Three have arrived in the 'flowering forest' of Panchavati in a green valley by the Godavari, with the mountains all around.

They're looking for a place in which to build their little hermitage, as safe as possible from the snakes and wild animals in the forest. Ram notes with satisfaction the ideal location of a woodland glade full of flowering creepers and shrubs. It is conveniently by the banks of the river, on which they see swans and chakravaka birds just as the *rishi* Agastya had told them they would.

The coppery mineral streaks in the mountains catch the light and gleam like the oval vents in the houses and buildings back in Ayodhya, or like the ceremonially painted hides of the royal elephants in the Ikshvaku stables. There's a lovely lake near the glade, in which deep pink and pure white lotuses bloom. Thick grass grows handily around for the *sandhya vandanam* or daily personal prayer.

Sita, who loves gardens and parks, finds the air sweet with golden champaka flowers. Ram is delighted to see many other kinds of trees, too – sal, tamal, jackfruit, mango, date palm, Ashok, shami and kishuk. He turns to strong, sturdy Lakshman and says, "Will you make a *parna-shala*, a thatched cottage for us in this pleasant place by the Godavari?"

He doesn't give Lakshman a single order, nor does Sita tell him to do this or do that; no one micro-manages.



Building a home, any home, requires love, trust and delicacy. It's an exercise in giving each other space. GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

Old-style commentators like to remind us here that it's because Lakshman is Adishesha the cosmic serpent, bound to serve Vishnu in his avatar as Ram. That is so in theological imagery, but story-wise, in their earthly situation, it's a lovely gesture of trust and delicacy.

Valmiki has Ram and Sita quietly leave it to Lakshman, who's never made a cottage before. Lakshman gets to work, raising a high clay floor, making strong pillars of bamboo for the clay walls, rafters of shami branches and a snug thatch of kusa and kaasa, grass and leaves. He has independent charge of the project and makes an admirable cottage so tactfully built that it thrills Ram and Sita.

Ram is so moved that he hugs Lakshman and says, "It's like father is back", meaning Lakshman has shown so much love and care in making the *parna-shala* that Ram, grieving for Raja Dasrath, feels comforted.

As family situations go, it seems to be about giving each other space and, in turn, doing our thoughtful best for each other. Valmiki is subtle like that. He creates touching incidents in which we may appreciate the nuances ourselves, which are satisfyingly modern in this particular case.

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The views expressed are personal

## HEALTHSCAN MEDICINE, FITNESS AND LIFESTYLE TRENDS

### REGULAR DENTAL VISITS MAY PREVENT PNEUMONIA

Good oral hygiene can limit quantities of bad bacteria in the mouth and thus decrease the risk of developing pneumonia, new research has found. Pneumonia is an infection that inflames air sacs in one or both lungs, which may fill with fluid. Routine dental visits will not only keep your teeth and gums healthy but can also reduce the amount of bacteria that is aspirated, which in turn keeps infections like pneumonia at bay. The study done by Virginia Commonwealth University in the US, found people who never get dental checkups had 86% greater risk of infection than those who visit their dentist at least twice a year. The research was presented at IDWeek 2016 in Los Angeles.

### CAFFEINATED ALCOHOL AS BAD AS COCAINE FOR TEENS

Drinking energy drinks mixed with alcohol triggers changes in the adolescent brain similar to taking cocaine, and the consequences last into adulthood as an altered ability to deal with rewarding substances, says a new study by Purdue University. Researchers say energy drinks contain 10 times as much caffeine as soft drinks, which are often marketed to teenagers. The study was published in the journals, Alcohol and PLOS ONE.

### CRANBERRIES NO CURE FOR URINARY INFECTIONS

You may enjoy the taste but contrary to the earlier belief, drinking buckets of cranberry juice cannot cure bladder infections. While some studies suggest that cranberry may reduce repeated infections in younger women, it is certainly not a treatment for an active case. The gold standard for treatment is antibiotics, a new study by Yale School of Medicine has found. It was published in JAMA. By some estimates, at least 50% of women will have at least one urinary tract infection over a lifetime.

IMAGES: ISTOCK, SHUTTERSTOCK