Comparing Yoga, Exercise, and a Self-Care Book for Chronic Low Back Pain: A Randomized, Controlled Trial

Abstract

Background: Chronic low back pain is a common problem that has only modestly effective treatment options.

Objective: To determine whether yoga is more effective than conventional therapeutic exercise or a self-care book for patients with chronic low back pain.

Design: Randomized, controlled trial.

Setting: A nonprofit, integrated health care system.

Patients: 101 adults with chronic low back pain.

Intervention: 12-week sessions of yoga or conventional therapeutic exercise classes or a self-care book.

Measurements: Primary outcomes were back-related functional status (modified 24-point Roland Disability Scale) and “bothersomeness” of pain (11-point numerical scale). The primary time point was 12 weeks. Clinically significant change was considered to be 2.5 points on the functional status scale and 1.5 points on the bothersomeness scale. Secondary outcomes were days of restricted activity, general health status, and medication use.

Results: After adjustment for baseline values, back-related function in the yoga group was superior to the book and exercise groups at 12 weeks (yoga vs. book: mean difference, −3.4 [95% CI, −5.1 to −1.6] [P < 0.001]; yoga vs. exercise: mean difference, −1.8 [CI, −3.5 to −0.1] [P = 0.034]). No significant differences in symptom bothersomeness were found between any 2 groups at 12 weeks; at 26 weeks, the yoga group was superior to the book group with respect to this measure (mean difference, −2.2 [CI, −3.2 to −1.2]; P < 0.001). At 26 weeks, back-related function in the yoga group was superior to the book group (mean difference, −3.6 [CI, −5.4 to −1.8]; P < 0.001).

Limitations: Participants in this study were followed for only 26 weeks after randomization. Only 1 instructor delivered each intervention.

Conclusions: Yoga was more effective than a self-care book for improving function and reducing chronic low back pain, and the benefits persisted for at least several months.
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Yoga classes were found to be more effective than a self-care book for patients with chronic low back pain at reducing symptoms and improving function, but they were not more effective than stretching classes, according to a new study. Share: FULL STORY. Yoga classes were found to be more effective than a self-care book for patients with chronic low back pain at reducing symptoms and improving function, but they were not more effective than stretching classes, according to a study published Online First by the Archives of Internal Medicine. A Randomized Trial Comparing Yoga, Stretching, and a Self-care Book for Chronic Low Back Pain. Archives of Internal Medicine, 2011; DOI: 10.1001/archinternmed.2011.524. Timothy S. Carey. Background. Chronic low back pain (CLBP) among nurses is a growing health concern. The multimodal nature of mind-body exercises has potential to impact physiological and psychological processes associated with chronic pain, affording possible advantages over conventional unimodal therapies. A third systematic review, including 10 clinical trials and a total of 967 participants, also concluded that there is evidence that yoga improves pain and disability in patients with CLBP [99]. In one randomized trial [102] of 160 healthy individuals with nonspecific low back pain, tai chi was compared with a waitlisted control group. Compared to the control group, 10 weeks of tai chi reduced distress associated with back symptoms and pain intensity and improved self-report disability. Comparison of Yoga, Exercise, and Education for the Treatment of Chronic Low Back Pain. Annals of Internal Medicine Vol 143 Issue 12 pp1-18. Dec 20 2005. Sherman KJ, Cherkin DC, Wellman RD, Cook AJ, Minnes PJ, Delaney K, Boyce RA. A Randomized Trial Comparing Yoga, Stretching, and a Self-care Book for Chronic Low Back Pain. Arch Intern Med. 2011 Oct 24. [Epub ahead of print]. Tilbrook HE, Cox H, Hewitt CE, Kang’ombe AR, Chuang LH, Jayakody S, Aplin JD, Semlyen A, Trewhela A, Watt I, Torgerson DJ. Yoga for chronic low back pain: a randomized trial. Ann Intern Med. 2011 Nov 1;155(9):569-78.