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## About Ashtanga Yoga

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### Introduction

Yoga is a holistic approach that has existed for thousands of years and originated in India over 5000 years ago. Since then, it has evolved and gained popularity due to its many potential health benefits. Yoga synchronizes physical postures (asanas), breathing techniques (pranayama), and meditation to promote physical, mental, and spiritual wellbeing [1]. Whether physically demanding, relaxing, or meditative, there are plenty of different yoga styles that suit health-related variables and behaviour outcomes. Ashtanga yoga, among other styles, is a dynamic, challenging sequence of postures that combines breath and movement, and it is often referred to as eight-limbed Yoga. In Sanskrit, ashtanga means "eight limbs" (ashta=eight, anga=limb), as it was outlined by the Indian sage Patanjali in his Yoga Sutras. The eight limbs of Yoga have a specific sequential relationship for the successful practice of Yoga to reap the best possible benefits of this holistic approach.

Ashtanga yoga is energetic and a full-body vigorous workout that requires discipline, flexibility, and stamina. This intense yoga practice, in particular, is known for its physical challenges and flowing poses, starting with sun salutations, followed by standing poses, seated poses, backbends, and a closing sequence. The poses are linked together in a flowing, continuous manner, and each pose is held for five breaths before moving to the next. Studies found that practicing Ashtanga yoga can purify the body and mind, help reduce stress, increase mindfulness, and promote overall health and wellbeing [2]. Ashtanga yoga is typically taught in a traditional Mysore-style format, where students practice independently but under the guidance of a teacher who provides individualized instruction and adjustments [2]. There are also classes available

where the teacher guides the entire class through the sequence of poses.

### Ashtanga's wellbeing dimensions

Identifying what wellbeing means and how it should be measured in a particular context is subjective. Overall, wellbeing can be referred to as a collection of domains based on what individuals intrinsically value [3]. Thus, wellbeing is not simply a positive emotion, but thriving across multiple life domains, integrating feeling good and functioning well [3]. In terms of practicing Ashtanga yoga, Ramirez et al. (2022) focused on 137 regular Ashtanga Yoga practitioners by exploring their perceptions of five dimensions of wellbeing (i.e., physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual [2]. However, practitioners represented awareness in every dimension of wellbeing differently based on their own experiences and perceptions. This study highlighted five dimensions of wellbeing linked with practitioners' perceptions as follows:

#### Physical dimension of wellbeing

Ashtanga yoga helped practitioners to improve flexibility, muscular strength, endurance, and cardiovascular fitness. Additionally, they noted physical wellbeing as the capacity to perform basic physiological functions, being able to perform daily tasks fully, and having a positive fit and strong outlook.

#### Mental dimension of wellbeing

Ashtanga yoga was linked to reductions in symptoms of anxiety and depression, as well as improvements in mood, self-acceptance, self-love, and having a sense of control and ownership of oneself.



### Emotional dimension of wellbeing

This dimension portrayed emotional wellbeing mainly as the presence of pleasant emotions, a sense of compassion, and cultivating a sense of inner peace and calmness.

### Social dimension of wellbeing

Ashtanga yoga provided a sense of proper interpersonal relationships, social connections, and social competence. Feeling connected and attuned to others and the environment was defined as experiencing a sense of pleasant connection to the external world through a sense of community, contribution, and harmony.

### Spiritual dimension of wellbeing

The spiritual dimension reflected broad mention of spiritual health, mindfulness, which helped practitioners feel more connected to themselves, others, and the world around them. This dimension was defined as a layer bridging the psychological self, and a sense of connection to divine, and to a higher purpose of meaning. Understanding the potential benefits of Ashtanga Yoga can offer a holistic and integrated approach to wellbeing, and the importance of developing regular practices that support optimal functioning. However, to better assess the benefits of Ashtanga yoga and consider to which persons it may be suited, it is important for beginners and individuals with certain health conditions to

consult their physicians before starting this yoga style. In addition, taking the time to consult with a physician can help individuals make informed decisions about their practice and ensure that they practice safely and effectively to prevent injury or worsening of any health issues.

### Acknowledgment

None.

### Conflict of Interest

No conflict of interest.

### References

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