



GMS INSURANCE

# Health & Wellness

February 2011 Volume 10, Issue 1

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## Yoga for the Young Ones

In the depths of winter, parents may find it difficult to get kids outside to get active and given that we are now almost two months into the winter season, the kids may be getting restless and, let's be honest, trying your last nerve! Parents may turn to the peaceful solitude and meditation offered by yoga. But why not engage the kids in yoga too?

Kids of all ages, from toddlers to teens, can reap the benefits yoga has to offer. A major element in the practice of yoga is the mind-body connection and finding a balance between them. Today's youth live in a world of constant stimulation. There are pressures at school, at after school activities, in video games, and competitive sports. Yoga can help counter these pressures through relaxation and breathing techniques. The physical aspect of yoga may also further enhance a child's performance in other activities.

Yoga can help to improve circulation and flexibility while strengthening the core and other muscles leading to improved balance and coordination. Relaxation and breathing exercises can have a calming affect on children and can give children the tools they need to deal with life experiences and stresses in a positive way.

For older children and teens, yoga can provide a platform for self-reflection and inner-fulfillment which in turn leads to greater self-awareness and self-esteem.

For the younger set, think of how much fun children will have pretending that they are a

fearless warrior, a graceful swan, a meowing cat, or a stinging scorpion. These are all yoga poses that can be incorporated into play.

Practicing yoga with children may require some modification to a typical practice session. "Dial up the fun, dial down the intensity!" says Sandy LeBlanc, a Toronto-area yoga instructor. She says that yoga should not be viewed as an athletic pursuit but rather as a physical/mental/spiritual regime that can be performed by anyone at any point in life. "[Yoga] can still be challenging and specific for children, respectful of their innate flexibility and under-developed joint stability."

One modification that may be necessary is keeping your young audience engaged. The attention span of a young child will be shorter than that of a teenager or an adult. Consider keeping them focused longer by using poses to tell a story or have them recite their 123s and ABCs while holding various poses.

Parents who practice yoga to help handle the pressures of parenthood, may find that practicing yoga with their children can help relieve some of those same parenthood pressures by having a child whose own yoga practice has made them more centered and balanced.

Until next time, Namaste.

Sources:

[www.fitjourney.ca](http://www.fitjourney.ca)

[www.yogajournal.com](http://www.yogajournal.com)

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