Can Bikram Yoga Help Reverse Cancer Processes?

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Important:

This article is in no way intended to replace professional medical advice. If you are facing an active cancer, please consult with your healthcare professional before using treatments to bring the tumor into remission.
This article is intended to serve educational purposes only. Medical research shows that practicing yoga can play a positive role in supporting recovery from cancer. However, little research is available on yoga's role in primary prevention of cancer (reversing the cancer processes before a tumor is ever discovered through standard medical diagnostics). Therefore, this article's purpose is to bring light to the possibilities of primary prevention of cancer through Bikram (or heated) yoga. This author's hope is that someday diagnostic tools will be available to measure the efficacy of cancer prevention methods on the initial cancerous processes.

Have you heard of Bikram yoga?

You have probably heard of Bikram yoga. The name is familiar perhaps because there's a Bikram yoga studio near you, or because you've seen the founder Bikram Choudhury on television. Or perhaps you're a already a dedicated Bikram yoga student

Bikram yoga is a unique form of yoga because it is practiced in high heat and moderate humidity. Entering the room feels like arriving in a New Orleans airport in mid-July. Before you even begin to stretch during the warm-up poses, you're already sweating buckets. A series of challenging poses gives you

the opportunity to stretch every muscle of your body. By the end of the class, you are not only well-stretched and limber, but also feel surprisingly clean.

During each pose, the yoga instructor will often inform you of several illnesses that can be relieved by that particular pose. However, rarely does an instructor mention cancer. Why not? It's just too controversial. Only qualified healthcare practitioners will talk about such a devastating and complex disease. But the question still remains: Can Bikram yoga actually prevent cancer or its recurrence? Although there are no guarantees, yoga can definitely reduce many of the risk factors of cancer.

Put another way, yoga can reverse cancer processes. By the end of this article, you will fully understand what benefits you can expect each time you enter the studio. This knowledge will help you make great healthcare decisions even outside the yoga studio. It can literally change your life.

Will cancer impact your life?

Is understanding cancer important? Absolutely. Cancer impacts almost all of us, directly or indirectly. It currently strikes almost 1 in 2 men and 1 in 3 women, and is the leading cause of death in the United States. Cancer incidence has risen 24% in the past three decades.

Most people do not pay attention to the possibilities of developing cancer until a tumor has been discovered with conventional medical diagnostics. Then, after receiving the dreaded diagnosis, they urgently reach for a treatment program with highly toxic and dangerous side effects. Those who survive treatment must contend with the continual possibility of a recurrence.

Indeed, the need for cancer prevention has never been higher than right now. And it's not hard to do. In fact, it's quite simple to dramatically decrease your risks for most cancers. From my experience as a physician, researcher, and

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consultant, the key to prevention begins with simple changes in the mindset that anybody can do.

For starters, most people think that cancer just sneaks up on them and "gets" them. What they don't realize is that cancer only grows within an "environment" that supports it. Just as a mosquito will only lay eggs on stagnant dirty water, and never on fresh moving water, cancer will only grow in certain bodily environments.

Here's another perspective: There is a reason why the cancer is there. It's not about bad luck; it's not about fate; it's not about thinking bad thoughts. These ideas disempower the innately powerful person that we all have within us. So why would cancer show up in someone's life?

The Iceberg: What lies beneath the surface CAN hurt you

There is an excellent metaphor that describes cancer. This metaphor is the iceberg. Imagine yourself onboard an ocean liner in northern lands, much like the Titanic. Off in the distance, you spot an iceberg jutting out of the water. The massive piece of ice appears to be a hundred feet tall.

Now let me ask you this: Are you seeing the whole iceberg?

Most people have learned that the answer to the question is "No." You are only seeing literally the tip of the iceberg. The vast majority of the iceberg is in fact underneath the water. You won't be able to see it unless you put on a wetsuit and go exploring underneath the surface.

What does this have to do with cancer? The tumor that one sees in a mammogram, CT scan, or other test is like the tip of the iceberg above the water. One can see and/or feel a tumor. However, underneath the surface lies a massive process that has culminated in the tumor. This process is called "cancer."

To continue the metaphor, suppose you were to chop off the tip of the iceberg so that you could no longer see it. Is the iceberg gone? Of course not. Similarly, to destroy the tumor using chemotherapy, radiation, or surgery does not mean that all the cancer processes are gone. Instead, they would continue to grow and push upward, until another tumor eventually surfaces.

Most importantly for you right now, the opportunities to reverse the cancer process are endless and always available. For those actively fighting a tumor, they can also reverse many of the cancer processes that would later lead to a recurrence. Some people develop a tumor twice, three times, four times, or more. What has happened? Somehow the underlying processes were never reversed.

To restate, removing the tumor and reversing the cancer are two very different issues. Most people only focus on the first. A simultaneous focus on the latter can provide even stronger support in recovery.

So, how can one reverse cancer processes? For this article, I will discuss a way to reverse many of the processes at the same time. It is a secret gem hidden from the Western culture for a long time, and has only recently been put together in a scientific way. What is it called? Bikram yoga.

But wait…Will MY body environment grow cancer?

Well, to begin, let's identify the five basic characteristics of a cancerous body. 1. It is highly "acidic". 2. It lacks oxygen. 3. It is full of toxic substances. 4. It has poor immunity. 5. It is disconnected from the "central processing unit" of the body, the overall master control center. Does this sound healthy to you?

These are five primary processes of cancer. They can culminate in genetic changes, and eventually a tumor. Bikram yoga can help reverse them.

Reduces Acidity

First, acidity. The work of many holistic professionals from around the world has shown that an imbalanced pH within the body is dangerous. In a toxic or stressful lifestyle, the body becomes excessively acidic. Just as many fungi love an acidic environment in which to live, so does cancer.

Bikram yoga greatly contributes to removing acids from the body. This happens through several routes. The lungs are a powerful vehicle for eliminating dangerous acids within the body. In chemical terms, they are called volatile acids, which means they can readily diffuse into air. The deep breathing techniques throughout yoga help to clear out many of these volatile acids.

The kidneys are a major route of eliminating acids. This is easily demonstrated by testing the pH of a first-morning urine sample. In other words, upon waking, one can use a pH strip (available at most pharmacies and supplement shops) to test the pH of their first urination of the day. The vast majority of the time, this urine is highly acidic. It often falls around 5.0-5.5 (below 7.0 is acidic). Ideally, you would want the urine pH to be above 5.5. The more acidic the body, the more acids will be eliminated by the kidneys (except in cases of kidney failure). A higher urine pH usually reflects less acid buildup. Because Bikram yoga increases metabolism and heart rate (and possibly glomerular filtration rate), the kidneys will clear out more acids. In addition, the extra water you drink during and after class helps to flush out additional acids.

Another major route of acid elimination is through the skin, via sweat. Bikram yoga induces more sweating than almost any other form of exercise! It is comparable to the native American sweat lodge. When I go to class, I always notice that my sweat feels more acidic in the first half, and more like water in

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the second half. Imagine how the body must feel to have released so many stored-up acidic toxins.

Removal of these acids creates a more alkaline environment within the body. Thus, Bikram yoga is one of the most powerful ways to reverse a common cancer process within the body. It is especially important if you have high risk factors, are battling an active cancer, or trying to prevent a recurrence. If you are currently dealing with an active cancer, be sure to discuss your yoga plans with your healthcare professional.

Re-oxygenates the body

Second, oxygenation. In the 1960's Otto Warburg discovered that proper oxygenation plays a major role in health. Dr. Warburg found that a reduction of oxygen by 35% could cause de-differentiation of cells. In other words, normal cells could potentially transform into cancerous cells. He found that oxygen is critical to the functioning of normal, healthy cells.

Within the walls of a tumor lie billions of cancerous cells that cannot withstand oxygen; in fact, they may die in the presence of oxygen. This discovery quickly prompted many alternative cancer treatments aimed at reversing cancer through increased oxygenation. They include hyperbaric oxygen chambers, ozone therapy, and the mineral germanium.

Even if one does not brave the alternative cancer treatment world, he/she can still take advantage of many lifestyle strategies to bring more oxygen into the tissues. One of the best ways to re-oxygenate the body is through Bikram yoga.

From the Pranayama breathing at the beginning, all the way to "fire breathing" at the end, yoga instructors will always tell you to focus on your breath. At the beginning, I found this almost impossible. I was too busy trying to listen to their crazy instructions about bending body parts in ways I did not know was

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possible. Or sometimes I found my mind wandering to subjects like grocery lists. But once the instructions became familiar, I was able to have moments where I only focused on breath.

Long deep inhales, followed by full exhales, help to move "stagnant air" out of the lungs. In essence, it moves out acids (such as carbon dioxide) and makes room for oxygen to come inside. Once inside, the oxygen quickly diffuses into the blood, to be carried throughout the body to every cell. The improved oxygenation promotes aerobic metabolism (and increased energy), rather than dangerous anaerobic metabolism with its resulting lactic acid buildup.

Strong levels of oxygen promote a healthy environment within the body—an environment in which cancer cannot grow. Bikram's breathing exercises are not just for fun; they have a deep and powerful impact on health.

A Remarkable Detoxification

Third, cancer grows amidst a body full of toxins. As mentioned earlier, cancer can only grow in a toxic environment. What types of toxins create a cancer-prone environment? Acids, carcinogens, pesticides, heavy metals, synthetic food chemicals (such as aspartame), artificial colors, preservatives, artificial sweeteners, medical drugs, toxins from bacterial/fungal infections, and much more.

To prevent these toxins from accumulating, the body has five major routes of detoxification: intestines, liver, kidneys, lungs, and skin. Incredibly, Bikram yoga activates all five of these routes.

In the Wind Removing pose, the person lies on the floor face-up and brings the knees to the chest. It's one of my favorite poses. While you are in this pose, the instructor may tell you that you are stimulating the ascending, transverse, and descending portions of the large intestine. This helps to move those built-up toxins out of your body.

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Other poses involve compressing your internal organs, such as the "Japanese ham sandwich" pose and Half Tortoise pose. This compression stimulates the organs of detoxification, including the liver and intestines.

When we take a deep breath in, the liver becomes "squished" by the diaphragm (a muscle that lies beneath the lungs and helps facilitate breathing). To explain the physiology of this action would be beyond the scope of this article. However, it is important to note that the liver is similar to a huge sponge. Every time you inhale, your liver receives a "massage" from the diaphragm. During Bikram yoga, with its hundreds of deep breaths every class, the liver gets a long massage, helping it to detoxify the toxins that can potentially contribute to cancer processes.

Why does the level of humidity in the yoga room matter? You've probably noticed that two different air qualities need to be controlled during Bikram yoga: temperature and humidity. Most people are aware that an increase in humidity results in an increased sensation of heat in the room. This is easily understood when comparing 100 degree weather in humid Florida versus dry Arizona. So the increased humidity in the room makes it seem hotter (feels like a giant steam room), but there's another advantage that readily helps to prevent cancer.

The act of heating up the skin for a period of time causes a release of toxins from the skin through sweat. These toxins include fat-soluble toxins and heavy metals, both of which can be carcinogenic. If you sweat while in dry air, what happens? The sweat evaporates and cools down your skin. This defeats the purpose of detoxification. You need the skin to stay hot and continue sweating. In Bikram yoga, the humidity in the room slows the evaporation of your sweat. Thus your skin stays heated for longer periods of time. This creates additional detoxification benefits in the skin not found in dry yoga classes.

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Yes, the sweat dripping down your face during poses may be distracting, but you are inducing a massive detoxification. Through Bikram yoga, you can drip yourself to health!

Some people have a body loaded of heavy metals, many of which may contribute to cancer processes. Examples of these heavy metals include mercury (from fish, teeth fillings), aluminum (from pots/pans, canned foods, canned drinks, deodorants), cadmium (from cigarettes), lead, and more. Elimination of such heavy metals can support the immune system and liver function.

How does one eliminate heavy metals? There are many tools available today, such as chelation therapy, infrared saunas, and more. However, the easiest way is through sweating. Sweat is a major route of elimination for heavy metals. If you have ever found your yoga towel to be darker in color after a class, you could have just released a substantial amount of heavy metals through your sweat. Your towel may be dirty, but your body will be happier.

Bolstering the immune system

Fourth, cancer grows within an immune-deficient environment. You may be surprised to know that the human body produces cancerous cells every day. Yes, your DNA makes plenty of mistakes every day, leading to abnormal cells. Luckily, the immune system is normally capable of destroying any abnormal cell that may arise.

However, when the immune system is deficient, abnormal cells will have the opportunity to "slip under the radar." If left unchecked, these cells can eventually proliferate. One of the most dangerous cancer processes is a deficient immune system. How can Bikram yoga remedy this problem?

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First, let's review a few basic facts about the immune system itself. Roughly 75% of the immune system is found in the intestines. The immune system has one function: to separate "me" and "not me." That which is "not me" needs to be destroyed and removed. That which is "me" can stay.

In the digestive tract, the food you just ate reaches a barrier: the intestinal wall. Your intestinal cells must make a decision right then and there: accept this nutrient as "me" or refuse it. The nutrients that build your whole body have to undergo this strict examination at the level of the intestine. Here's the problem: if the digestive system is damaged, there is a breach in this system. The immune layer within the intestinal walls cannot do its job. Pieces of "not me" substances can pass right into the blood stream. This puts tremendous stress on the whole body, and potentially weakens important parts of the immune system.

Bikram yoga helps to restore the immune system in several ways. It helps stimulate the passage of food through the digestive tract (called peristalsis). This is accomplished through mechanical and hormonal means. Mechanically, the twisting of the abdomen during many yoga poses helps to push food along the digestive tract. In addition, the relaxation between poses helps to trigger hormones and nerve cells that increase digestion and peristalsis. The "dead body pose" at the middle and end of the class is extremely powerful in restoring the digestive tract's functions. Therefore, immunity throughout the body is improved, and cancer processes are reversed.

Bikram yoga also helps the immune system through detoxification. When a toxic burden exists within the body, the immune system struggles to deal with it. This is similar to having a hidden infection within a tooth that causes havoc on the immune system for years. Releasing those toxins frees the immune system to continue its surveillance function of looking for cancerous cells.

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Re-Connecting the Mind with the Body

Fifth, a disconnected mind and body can contribute to cancer risk factors. While this area is poorly understood from a hardcore research perspective, clinicians across the world see supportive evidence over and over again.

In another article called "The Messages of Cancer", I elaborate on how control of the mind and emotions can impact the outcome in cancer. When we lose awareness of our feelings and thoughts, due to a busy and stressful lifestyle, cancerous processes may become triggered and support tumor growth. Please note that I am not, and never will, say that specific thoughts cause cancer. I am only saying that a disconnection between the mind and body will create conditions which may allow cancer to grow, if other risk factors are also present.

All types of yoga, including Bikram, help greatly with improving the connection between mind and body. This works in several ways:

First, as you continue with classes, you become more sensitive and aware of your body. You will notice subtle changes that you might not have noticed before. For instance, you may notice that you feel different if you miss class for a week or two. As you become more in-tune with your body, you begin to recognize when something feels "off." In the case of cancerous processes, you will become an expert at "early detection." Just like a mammogram, PSA test for the prostate, or a colonoscopy, you will become a human barometer for your own body. The more you practice yoga, the better you become at noticing subtle changes within.

Second, many of the poses elicit great emotions. For example, when I come out of Camel pose, sometimes I have an overwhelming urge to cry. Other times I want to just start laughing! It's amazing how that particular pose really brings emotions to the surface. One of the hypothesized characteristics of

cancer is the inability to connect with emotions and release them. Bikram yoga helps facilitate this releasing process. Its psychosomatic power is remarkable.

Finally, defeating cancer requires courage, strength, discipline, and tenacity. Practicing yoga helps prepare one for the necessary endurance to beat cancer. What do I mean by this?

Sometimes the hardest part of Bikram yoga is simply showing up! Just walking through the front door of the studio can be challenging on days when you don't want to go but know you should. Then, completing 1.5 hours of intense exercise and sharp focus requires another level of discipline and challenge. Your reward upon completion of yoga class is not a gold medal or a $1000 cash prize…it's that you accomplished something you didn't think you could do. This is far more empowering than any other reward. For me, accomplishing one thing motivates me to accomplish another, then another. Success can really "snowball" and take you to a higher level than you've ever been before.

Indeed, you feel clean after a yoga class, and inspired by your incredible accomplishment and discipline. So you go home and have a healthier meal than you ordinarily would eat. Then you feel the energy to make more significant contributions at your work. Which motivates you to improve your relationships with family and friends. And on and on.

Bonus: The most important step to reverse cancer

Now that we've covered the five primary ways Bikram yoga can reverse cancer processes, I'd like to give you a bonus. You will now learn the most important step to reverse cancer. But be warned: it's not easy.

The biggest part of reversing cancer processes is consistent action. It's not about taking massive steps. It's about little steps done over and over again.

As motivational guru Tony Robbins states, "Ordinary efforts consistently applied yield extraordinary results."

Regular yoga practice can help you reach your goals, but it will also bring results you might have never imagined possible! Can Bikram yoga really prevent and/or reverse cancer processes? There are no guarantees and hardcore research is limited, but it will certainly reverse many of the pathological processes that can culminate in a disease called cancer. Every person is different, and your results will be different from your neighbor's results. But keep going on your journey, because regardless of your own outcome, you are a role model for everyone else in your life. And you never know who's watching.

Attend your yoga class on a regular basis, and feel the magic happen!

Extra Bonus: Practical Health Tips for yoga lovers

1. During yoga class, make sure your breaths are as full as possible.
2. Add a little sea salt or trace elements drops to your water bottle. I prefer the ConcenTrace brand in my own bottle.
3. Use a glass water bottle if possible. If not, a hard plastic bottle that is BPA-free is second best (look for the #7 inside the recycling triangle on the bottom of the bottle). Avoid the use of soft plastic bottles in the hot room.
4. After class, take a glass of water with a Greens powder (either a wheat grass/barley grass mix or powdered organic fruit/veggie mix). Your digestion will be at a maximum and better absorb these nutrients.

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About the Author:

Dr. Joel E Brame is an expert in educating and motivating others to achieve their health and energy goals. Trained as a physician and counselor, Dr. Brame shows others how to find greater health and vitality, and create a renewed body with inspiration and confidence. He has personally experienced the radical transformations that come with an energized and healthy lifestyle, overcoming several chronic ailments through lifestyle changes alone.

Joel's messages of positive energy and precise action extend through his workshops, keynotes, books, articles, websites, and consulting. He serves as a professor in biological sciences at local colleges.

Joel has contributed articles to many local and online publications and has given award-winning radio interviews on cancer. He is also a sought-after speaker on holistic approaches to energy and cancer recurrence & prevention. Visit www.joelbrame.com for further resources, tips, and available books and articles.

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