

# hot yoga, the dangers and myths

hot yoga, is it for you?

## Hot Yoga: The Dangers and Myths You Need to Know

There are so many Hot yoga studios popping up now, Bikram Yoga, hot Yoga or sweaty yoga. meaning that all classes are done in a heated room with a temperature range from around 90 degrees to 117 degrees. I used to love hot yoga when I was younger and indestructible! That is, until I learned more about the effects of heat on the body when doing any sort of movement, albeit yoga or working out in external, extreme heat.

Hot yoga is a huge craze at the moment. It's getting more difficult to find a studio that isn't heated, and all modalities are taught in a heated environment from the standard Bikram Yoga to Vinyasa, flowing Yoga. Here are some facts that can help you make the decision yourself, whether yoga in external heat is your friend or your enemy.

## External Heat and Body Heat

Hot yoga brings its own external heat source to heat up a room to around 100 degrees. But it's important to mention that you produce your own internal heat when you exercise, and yes, you can consider yoga moderate exercise. Hot yoga uses static holds (and some flow), which means you are lengthening specific parts of the body depending on what pose you are in and then contracting other parts of the body to keep you stable, which means you are isometrically contracting the muscles that are keeping you stable.

How does your body produce its own internal heat? Several chemical reactions occur in the cells of the muscle tissue. These cells then release energy, which is in the form of heat. The rate of chemical reaction increases during muscle contraction thereby increasing internal heat of the body. This concept is important later on as we continue to talk about heat and its effects on the body.

Hot yoga pretty much gives you a heat-on-heat response, which can lead to heat exhaustion or even heat stroke. When internal heat rises, vasodilation occurs in the blood vessels, which means the vessels open in the skin and you begin to sweat to cool the body to keep the body within the normal range of body temperature. So you are sweating to cool the body down, you have an increase in blood flow, but the room is heated to over 100 degrees, therefore you have no way of actually cooling your body down, which can cause a disruption of internal body temperature.

## How Things Go Wrong in Hot Yoga

The reason there is a disruption is because the body cools itself down in various ways, but the ones to focus on are conduction, convection, and evaporation. Conduction is exchange in heat with two objects in contact with each other, convection is exchange in heat between the body and air or water, and evaporation is the conversion of water from a liquid to a gas, a process that requires heat. When you are in the heated room, the reason it gets so humid is because several different bodies are sweating and the heat is trying to escape from the bodies because their internal temperatures are increasing.

So what happens when you are so hot in a hot yoga room, you can't get out, and you begin to get sick? You may be starting to suffer from heat exhaustion. Your body keeps temperature homeostasis via a negative feedback system. This system is working during heat exhaustion, but in this scenario it can't prevent an increase in body temperature above the normal level. This heavy sweating results in dehydration, decreased blood pressure, and increased heart rate. You may end up feeling weak, dizzy, and nauseated.

When feeling like this you must move into a cooler environment, but having been in many hot yoga studios, many yoga instructors either look down upon seeking relief or encourage students to stay in the room. If you ever have these symptoms you must get into an area of cooler temperatures to get the body back into temperature balance straight away. If you don't, it may lead to heat stroke that in many cases can require hospitalization.

## The Myth of Sweating Toxins

Does your yoga instructor tell you that the sweating is good for you because you are releasing toxins from the body? Well, this statement is not 100% true. Most of what you are sweating is water, but there are other chemicals that make up sweat including salt, potassium, ammonia, and urea. True toxin elimination comes from the kidneys and liver, and some from the colon. Doing a ninety-minute hot yoga session and sweating to death is not

releasing toxins. You really are just dehydrating yourself and losing only water weight. I hate the burst the bubble, but my statement is true to the facts of body's biological systems. If you really want to eliminate toxins from the body, it's best to talk to your physician or purchase an over-the-counter liver, kidney, or colon cleanse made out of natural ingredients.

#### The Myth of Flexibility

There is a difference from muscular flexibility and joint flexibility. Your ligaments and tendons don't get much blood flow, especially your ligaments. The reason for this is because your ligaments are in place to stabilize the joints. When you are in a heated environment, your blood flow increases making you feel like you are more flexible then you really are. It's important to understand that when ligaments stretch out they stay that way and cause joint instability.

Everyone assumes that yoga is good for rehabbing, but understand that yoga is simply another form of moderate exercise and you can still injure yourself. Just be careful that not all Yoga teachers are highly experienced, and ready to make the modifications for different bodies that may be needed to join a practice. Understand, this is not to say all yoga instructors are this way. There are many excellent yoga instructors who teach in a heated environment and keep students safe, and if a student is showing signs of heat exhaustion the instructor immediately cares for the student. But unfortunately, not all yoga instructors are created equal.

For all of you athletes, keep yourself safe. Walk out if it's just too HOT. Don't surpass your sticking point. And lastly, do your homework. Find a yoga studio and instructor that are right for you.

The Business of Yoga has many instructors that come to you wherever you are, they all have different training and years of experience.

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