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Yoga for the AGING - or +50 - Boomers and Zoomers

What age is a Senior ? = there is no real answer - Each Senior has a unique set of physical and physiological circumstances.

The three most common medical conditions to be considered when working with this group are: Osteoarthritis, Hypertension, and Osteoporosis

## **MEDICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

### **1.Arthritis**

Arthritis is the leading cause of disability in the USA and considered to be somewhat “normal” to have pain and discomfort by the medical profession. Rheumatoid Arthritis is a different disease category – as it is an auto-immune condition – we will be focusing on Osteoarthritis for the purpose of this paper - also called DJD – or Degenerative Joint Disease.

Physiologically the cartilage and cushioning material around the joint wears down, limiting range of motion in the joints. The most commonly affected joints are the hips, knees, Spine and the hands – especially the thumb joint. Arthritis can be accelerated in the very active and also in competitive athletes by excessive wear and tear of the joints – and for this group it may show up at an earlier age but most aging adults experience some form of this condition.

Symptoms are : stiffness and pain of the affected joints and also inflammation in the joints which may result in joint weakness and deformities . Some complain that weather affects their symptoms – generally feeling better in warm conditions. Symptoms are often more significant in the early morning – or after a period of being sedentary - it feels worse after not moving, while sleeping at night or any period of immobility . In more advanced cases there is visible deformity of the joint and significant pain.

Dr Karl Knopf states “some days you will be pliable and some days you will be stiff as a board –respect that fact “ as the symptoms are well-documented to be often inconsistent.

Lifestyle considerations - Emotional and Psychological Stress which lead to tension in the body - and in the muscles will put more stress on the joints. Also higher -impact and competitive sports - i.e. running ,football, hockey, wrestling.

For those that have Arthritis it has psychological effects - the pain and disability can lead to isolation and depression – dealing with loss of ability to participate in previously enjoyed hobbies & activities.

Medical Treatments are generally oral pharmaceuticals - NSAID anti-inflammatory and muscle relaxants or any pain relievers that help i.e. OTC – ( over the counter ) Aspirin, Tylenol Ibuprophen

Diet - consuming certain – foods can activate the “inflammatory response “ in the body - aggravating arthritis .

Dr. Vijay Vad M.D. in his book “Arthritis RX “ states there is a very definite link between diet and inflammatory response in the body. Pro-inflammatory foods - red meats and hydrogenated fats used in commercial baking and cooking . This means all deep fried foods, food from fast food outlets, commercial crackers, cookies , chips – potato and corn chips, commercial Salad Dressing etc - cause the cells to produce free Oxygen radicals - these radicals start a chain reaction - and attach themselves to cell membranes- which leads to damage in the DNA & RNA ( the blueprint for our cells ) triggering mutations in tissue, blood vessels and skin.

Lifestyle - as well as diet -excessive amounts of pollution, cigarette smoking, herbicides can also increase the Inflammatory response.

Chakra considerations - since Arthritis may occur in many different places all over the body – the different areas of the body affected would correspond to different Chakra’s.

**2. Hypertension** - or elevated Blood Pressure –When there is more pressure in the arteries, veins and heart that is pumping the blood throughout the body - than “*normal*” Blood Pressure which is considered to be 120/80 - (or this is considered to be a safe BP reading.) Over the long term higher than normal Blood Pressure puts the patient at much higher risk for Heart Attack and Stroke – as the blood rushing through the Cardio Vascular system causes wear and tear on the arteries and veins. (like water rushing over rocks - - erosion happens ) This condition is serious and if out of control can lead to Heart Attack and Stroke.

Lifestyle considerations - stress – the Biggest factor I believe is a fast-paced lifestyle – the type “A” personality who rushes around in a constant state of hyper-nervousness. Also a cause of hypertension can be Diet - a diet high in fat and cholesterol - resulting in Hyperlipidemia ( high levels of saturated fats floating around in the blood) – which clogs the arteries and veins – as these cardiovascular pathways become narrowed the Blood Pressure rises . Also a high intake of Sodium can cause the body to retain more fluids – thereby increasing Blood Pressure . The typical North American diet – of fast foods, snacking on potato chips , crackers, pretzels- even most restaurant meals are very high in Sodium( NaCl) . Commercial restaurants and Bars use lots of salt - since salt gives food lots of flavour - and customers will drink more - especially alcohol if they are given salty snacks which make them thirsty . Overweight - especially Obese ( more than 20 % over ideal body weight ) individuals have elevated Blood Pressure from the extra workload on the Cardiovascular system of moving blood through all the extra tissues. Also not as commonly - Hypertension can also be caused by Kidney or Heart malfunction resulting in excess fluid in the body - Edema causing the Hypertensive state in these cases.

Although some will experience light headedness, headaches , vertigo etc many patients will have no symptoms – and that is why Hypertension is often called the “Silent Killer “.

Once the pressure rises much above this “normal value “ 120/80 Systolic over Diastolic - Medical Doctors will prescribe medications to lower the BP = however all of which have side-effects .

There are a variety of Pharmaceutical's – Diuretics - which help the body eliminate fluids( increases urinary output ) with side effects of frequent urination, mouth & skin dryness, constipation sometimes potassium depletion.

Other medication often prescribed are - Beta-blockers – which open your blood vessels and slow the heart rate - long term side-effects it may change the elasticity of the the arterial walls . There is a whole plethora of drugs given in various combinations for this condition.

CHAKRA Analysis – Hypertension is associated with a problem of the Heart Chakra – the 4<sup>th</sup> Chakra

Angina. – hyper tension or hypotension is considered to be a dysfunction of this Chakra - also pain in the shoulders and breathing problems , also the breasts especially in women

Psychological problems – putting the needs of others ahead of ourselves , not receiving or giving love and compassion

### **3. Osteoporosis**

A condition in which the bone mass is decreased –thus increasing risk of fractures.

Medically – This happens as a result of Menopause in women – hormonal changes- when the body no longer secretes Estrogen which is the “boss” or controls the bone building process – the bone destroying mechanism gets out of hand. Osteoporosis can also sometimes be drug induced from Steroids medications (cortisone) and Chemotherapy.

In the normal healthy human the Bone building process is to continually break down and then build up bone material to keep the bones strong. Calcium, phosphorous, Vitamin D and vitamin C that work synergistically are all needed to optimize this process.

In Advanced cases Fractures of - the wrists, hips and spine & ribs are most common – 55% of those over 50 have Osteopenia – or below normal bone mass and 80% of these are women . Symptoms - usually in the beginning there are few - however as the condition advances - pain associated with fracturing of bones - hip ,wrist , and collapsing of vertebrae We - often witness in elderly women kyphosis commonly called the Widow's Hump. All fractures will result in pain, decreased independence , and then resulting depression .

The Causes – some are lifestyle factors - there are certain predisposing factors - diet – eating sugar increases the rate at which we excrete calcium from the body, caffeine promotes calcium loss through the urine . Other factors - Soda Pop which has phosphoric acid , excess intake of salt (sodium ) Alcohol smoking, genetic predisposition –(blue eyed blondes , small bone structure - northern European descent ), lack of weight bearing exercise- all contribute to loss of bone mass.

Stress when the body goes into the “flight or fight “ mode - also makes the blood more Acidic - which then the body’s homeostatic mechanisms remove calcium from the bones as the body attempts to bring the PH balance of the blood back to normal .

More recently medical researchers have found a link between Vitamin D and Osteoporosis -as Vitamin D is required to help the body absorb Calcium - women who live in Northern climates- with no Sunshine for many month’s have much more occurrence of Osteoporosis. Vitamin D is the ‘KEY” that unlocks the door to allow the body to absorb the mineral Calcium.

Treatment for Osteoporosis — the Medical profession will recommend increasing calcium – often via supplements , and participating in weight-bearing exercise. Pharmaceuticals such as Fosomax – are not very effective - results have really only slowed the breakdown of bone mass –not increased Bone Density . Dr David Hanley Endocrinologist – Research Chair at the University of Calgary states that technology currently available to measure bone mass is still really very primitive . Bone Density reports are not necessarily an accurate measure of bone strength or quality – it is only 1 measure of bone tissue.

Chakra Analysis : 1<sup>st</sup> Chakra or Root Chakra is associated with Osteoporosis -issues such as insomnia, low back – pain in feet ,legs or hips , constipation, disorders of the bones. Psycho-social problems - - lack of security, safety, - fear – anxiety, flightiness, addictions and fear of change.

#### 4. Menopause

One other Condition to consider for +50 Yoga Women is MENOPAUSE - although not a medical condition – or disease -it can produce uncomfortable Symptoms - hot flash’s, mood swings, insomnia etc.

Suza Francina in Yoga and the Wisdom of Menopause states “ Menopause metamorphosis is a complete change at a cellular level. “

Dr . Christine Northrop states “ At mid-life more psychic energy become available to us than at any other time in our life “

The years after mid-life are an ideal time for Psychological & Spiritual growth . Practicing Yoga helps us to restore health and vitality to our bodies - it also supports our emotional & spiritual well-being as we grow older. When the ovaries are only producing a very small amount of Estrogen - Healthy Adrenals become more important . Adrenals can be depleted by stress, poor Nutrition, constant stimulation from Coffee and sugar, environmental pollution etc, - Depleted Adrenals lead to mood swings and Fatigue and Depression (even Chronic Fatigue Syndrome ). The adrenals secrete epinephrine which affects heart rate, blood pressure and alertness of brain and body. A Yoga class can provide a very positive and supportive environment for the older students. The calm, slow and rhythmical breathing in pranayama helps release physical tension bringing more Oxygen into the body and brain which encourages a deep relaxation that is restorative to every cell in the body .

The Adrenal cortex also secretes Cortisol –a natural steroid that suppresses inflammation . but Cortisol can also suppress the Immune system. When the Adrenals are repeatedly activated with no recovery time this can lead to exhaustion, mood swings even Chronic Fatigue. Symptoms of Adrenal Exhaustion

include :fatigue, low stamina, depression, mood swings, addictions, - this will in turn contribute to Hot Flash's , headaches, dizziness and elevated Blood Pressure.

“The demands of an always on the go lifestyle fall most heavily on the adrenals and our bodies are not designed to sustain this constant toll. The cumulative effect over many years is enormous –and it tends to peak between the ages of 35 and 55. If left unchecked these stresses can create serious problems including fatigue, insomnia, sleep disturbances, digestive problems, loss of libido, and stubborn weight gain. “ stated from the “Women to women “ website.

## PHYSICAL -STRUCTURAL ALIGNMENT

*Arthritis & Osteoporosis* - these 2 conditions are very similar as far as Yoga Structural Alignment Therapy .

Taking our joints through their full range of motion can help prevent Degenerative Arthritis or mitigate disability by massaging & lubricating cartilage and joints that normally are not used. It stimulates the body to produce Synovial Fluid in our joints – which is like “oil “ - so our joints move more smoothly and very necessary to keep our joints healthy.

Joint cartilage is like a sponge, it receives fresh nutrients only when it's fluid is squeezed out and new supply soaked up. Some older adults with years of accumulated tightness & stiffness - from Fitness (caused by Obsessions with Outer Appearances) - become tighter and stiffer - will do this to look firmer - when it is really more important to have opening and lengthening in the muscles and joints. Competitive sports also encourage - a great lack of mindfulness as we move – ignoring pain and messages that your body might be sending you in the drive to WIN to set goals and strive for more – so the joints will suffer !

Posture is a huge factor in both of Arthritis and Osteoporosis - “Posture affects every system of the body – bones, joints ,muscles, tendons, nerves, endocrine glands, cardiovascular & respiratory systems.

So Yoga can be so beneficial for the aging body - lengthening our Spine with good posture to create space between the Vertebrae is vital to our health.

*For Osteoporosis* - “ Weight bearing exercise (such as Downward Dog ) stimulates mini-electrical currents in your skeleton that draws strengthening materials right into the bone matrix “ states Suza Francina . A well rounded Yoga practice includes weight-bearing postures that take your body through its full range of motion, lengthen the Spine, open your posture, stretch and strengthen the muscles in a balanced way – also reducing wear and tear on the joints. Why is Yoga a superior form of weight-bearing exercise exercise ? - students use their full range of motion, - both upper and lower body, improved balance & co-ordination thus preventing falls, it stimulates the endocrine glands ( formation of bone tissue stimulated ) - improved posture – less shortening and rounding of the Spine. In our culture- people sit so much their backs become rounded, the head is carried forward, the chest collapses – there is a general rounding of the spine .

## *Hypertension*

Structural Alignment Therapy - in order for the heart and lungs to function optimally - we need to have “Space for them in our chest “ By having good posture - mountain pose , - when in tall – well aligned posture – the internal organs can function optimally – by moving the body in asana’s we greatly improve our circulation in the internal organs as well as the periphery – the hands and feet of the body.

Pranayama – can be so helpful in improving the lung capacity - and deeper breathing will help to bring about the Relaxation Response - softening arterial wall tension and pressure - to bring about lowering of Blood Pressure

Also a Sedentary lifestyle and poor posture will exacerbate Hypertension as– Ayurveda encourages daily walks to help balance Kapha as well as gentle Asana’s

## **YOGIC VIEW**

**KOSHAS** – the 5 sheath’s of the Body and how they are affected by the Aging Process :

Anamaya Kosha - the outer physical body

As we age – our physical body and self-image may change in a negative way –sad feelings of loss & change in your body that you have no control over. The loss of youthfulness – as weight gain happens , the changing shape of the body and posture, hair colour changes, skin becomes drier and wrinkled - we have *many* changes occurring in the outer physical body – the Anamya Kosha - some people find it very difficult to face in our culture of Obsession with outer appearances and youth . This causes unhappiness and psychological - depression in over 50 age group. The stiffness and pain of Arthritis and Osteoporosis - will mean that a more Sedentary Life is frequently adopted - however to try and alleviate pain –this really exacerbates the whole situation. Kapha increase as humans age – but we need to Balance our Kapha – characteristics’ of : gaining weight more easily, being sluggish and inactive of mind and body- that produce dullness of body and mind. By adopting Yoga’s asana’s , pranayama and following other Ayurvedic practices – such as diet –Kapha can be balanced with the other kosha’s .

Pranamaya Kosha

Our Prana being our Life Force or our Breath - linked to life and death – we enter this life on an inhale and we exit this life on an exhale !

With many medical conditions come changes in our prana – Osteoarthritis and Osteoporosis can bring change to the muscle/skeletal body that will affect the breathing - with the rounding of the cervical and thoracic spine, the ribs become very immobile, the chest collapses inward ( Kyphosis will develop with Osteoarthritis and especially in advanced stages of Osteoporosis ) - the lungs are more compressed as it become difficult for these people to stand or sit in an erect posture.

Since the Spine and ribs are involved in breathing - often a more shallow breathing pattern develops – so Pranayama – taught with first Breath Awareness and then later adding Pranayama Techniques such as Bramhari breath - will assist the breath to become deeper, slower and smoother .

Calm, slow rhythmic breathing helps release physical and emotional tension in the body – brings more Oxygen to the body and brain – and brings a Deep Relaxation which is restorative to every cell in the body.

From Psychology To-day - “Longstanding anger and hostility compromise lung function and accelerate the decline in Lung Power that normally occurs with aging “ in their study Yoga exercises for 20 minutes a day 3 times a week for 6 weeks – improved breathing capacity of all participants in the study group .

Mano Maya Kosha – the Mental & Emotional Body

“As we age our Manomaya Kosha becomes more burdened with stress and injuries. We store everything we have learned and all the scars of past wounds ” writes Liliias Folan in her book “Yoga gets Better with Age” . Often Seniors suffer from Depression caused by loses of loved ones, loneliness ,inability to perform previously enjoyed hobbies or sports , loss of independence as symptoms advance – feeling very disconnected from the world. Some will dwell on memories of the past – longing for days gone by - here Yoga can be extremely effective to help bring Seniors into the present moment – with the practice of Yoga – asanas, pranayama and mindfulness meditation. By adopting Santosha - or contentment and being grateful for whatever we have - and accepting whatever our body is at this present moment – we can eventually come to a place of inner peace.

When the Mono maya ksha is very burdened Yoga can help teach students coping strategies - “I am not my thinking “ – if you are a worrier and project in to the future – turning the thought around to the opposite. You can also ground yourself in the now –“ I do not have to think about this now “

Visualizations in meditation can be valuable tools for letting go of the past and moving forward -

Expect the unexpected as this is right –brain activity !

Vijnanamaya Kosha

Our wisdom, our judgment and discernment.

Here is a great opportunity for “ tapping into your inner reservoir of knowledge and intuition, and the more you tap it – the more you will trust your own judgment and decision making. “

Meditation is a way to tap into our wisdom body through the “Witness “. Meditation does not teach you to stop your thinking but skillfully manage your thinking. Being able to practice Ahimsa with ourselves

Anandamaya Kosha

The innermost body – the 5<sup>th</sup> sheath the Bliss Body – Spirit

Here we can access feeling of Stillness, Love, Peace, Ease and Contentment

A place where much growth can take place Here is this 4<sup>th</sup> season fall-winter of our life we can enjoy more free time to as we move away from the material world - and the work of raising a family and having a job are finished. - The gift of time can be used for pursuing the Spiritual area & great growth can occur – we can pursue Spiritual Enlightenment.

## Healing Plan

### Anamaya Kosha

Principles for teaching Yoga Classes for +50

Lilas Folan in her book “Yoga gets Better with Age “ suggests using a Yin approach = cool, calm, inward focused when teaching Yoga to +50 age group

-comfortable and enjoyable ways to increase your body awareness. Learning to listen to the body’s messages

-becoming aware of stress and tension in the body

Warming up slowly before beginning an Asana practice

Dynamic Movement ( not holding a static position ) assists the muscles and fascia to release

\*Fascia\* says Lillias Folan “ is like toffee - it needs to be warm and then stretched very slowly”

A suggested sequence for warming up the body is : neck, upper back, lower back , sides of body ,hips before chest seat muscles before groin, calves before hamstrings, shins before thighs and Lillias says the body will respond more positively to these techniques

Also the use of self massage, thumping or tapping the body will respond to positively

### Pranamaya Kosha

Pure Prana being our Life Force or Energy our breath or our life and in illness there will often be an improper flow of Prana.

Our nose is the best filter for the air as it moisturizing and warms the air for our lungs - it provides a tunnel for Oxygen, it also produces mucus and drainage for the sinuses.

There is a Strong connection between the breath and the emotions ; and changing your breath patterns can shift your emotional state. Lengthening the Exhalation will clear the mind, quiet your inner dialogue



resulting in better control of Anger, Fear Anxiety and Pain. The same Exhalations will ease you into sleep and improve your concentration.

Bramari Breath “bee” or humming exhalation can be used – as well as Nadi Shoshana - alternate nostril breathing and many other Simple Breath awareness exercises.

Interrupted Inhalations Viloma I or Kalabhtai - breath of fire are *not* recommended for Seniors -due to the possible medical conditions that may exist - hypertension being the most contra-indicated

Mano-Maya Kosha – the mental /emotional body

We tend to store everything we have learned - here in this Kosha.

Scars of past emotional wounds – can be embedded in the body. Negative energy from dwelling on what has gone wrong, past grievances, old frustrations, etc can produce a nasty energy in the body that affects the health – we need to cultivate Gratitude and affirmations to counteract this.

Breathing and Relaxation Technique, Meditation can be enormously helpful in keeping our mental/emotional body healthy; strengthening our compassionate witness and cultivating detachment which will help to keep us in Balance

For emotional pain – the only way out is through it = “you have to feel it to heal it “

The first step is recognizing and acknowledging the emotions that reside in the pain body.

Acknowledging them and symbolically letting them go – helps you get in touch with the pain and provides some tools to begin releasing it. Practicing visualization and relaxation techniques is like putting money in the bank – it is there when you need it.

A Yoga class can provide very positive social support to the older student – improving mood. The calm, slow and rthymical breathing helps release physical tension bringing more Oxygen into the body and brain encourages a deep relaxation that is restorative to every cell in the body.

Vijnana Maya Kosha- which is wisdom, judgment, discernment – tapping into your inner reservoir of knowledge and intuition - the more you tap into it the more you will trust your own judgment and decision making. The way to tap into our wisdom body is through the “Witness” in meditation . Meditation does not teach you to stop thinking but how to skillfully manage your thinking. With aging - from mid-life and beyond - you have a LARGE reservoir of wisdom available to you from years of life experiences .

Suggestions FOR Meditation - You can start with even just 3 minutes

Set your intention- give yourself completely to the process - use the YES I CAN affirmation  
Soften the jaw and gaze toward your heart  
Choose a breathing technique

You may do some Yoga Asana first  
Most important - BE PATIENT with your self

### Ananda Maya Kosha

Here in the 5<sup>th</sup> Sheath – our deepest most inner Layer – the bliss body resides  
Feelings of Stillness, Love, Peace, Ease and Contentment can be found  
Separation from our Ananda can be painful denial of our true nature

There is a thin veil that stands between us and our Higher Self – causing disconnect from our Spirit

Worry, sadness, anger, are not good or bad of themselves but just low grade energy causing stress and tension in the body which drains out our Life Force and separates us from our Ananda Maya Kosha.

For example a Smile - can be “polite; a grimace, a grin; or even a bear it smile as opposed to a Genuine Smile that shows gratitude, appreciation, delight, awe or amazement - and radiates love and peace.

Taoist Masters believe that our most accessible and immediate form of bliss energy we have is –to have a sincere SMILE

## **Ayurveda for Healing**

### Osteoarthritis

-due to a Kosha imbalance – can be Vatta, Pita or Kapha, believed to be mainly caused by sluggish digestion and to build up and block nourishment of the joints – leading to the pain and stiffness.

Diet : Eat plenty of fresh, simple whole-cooked foods such as vegetable soups, and rice dishes seasoned with digestive spices such as garlic, ginger, cumin, coriander - Avoid heavy, cold, oily, and mucus-promoting foods- particularly wheat, pork, red meat and dairy –such as milk, yogurt and ice cream. Drink lots of hot water throughout the day - have a cup of ginger tea after every meal- this helps to flush toxins out of the system. Avoid all chilled and iced drinks. Avoid stale, tinned, refrigerated, frozen foods- “fresh is best “. Eat smaller quantities of food – have your evening meal before 7 – give yourself time to digest fully before going to bed.

For joint pain - make a bolus of ginger and ajwain powder, heat it and apply to affected area. Soak 1 Tablespoon of Sesame seeds in ¼ cup of water for 2 hours – blenderize and then filter it - drink this twice a day – this will nourish and strengthen your joints . Avoid sleeping during the day – as this promotes kapha- which then slows the process of digestion and metabolism

Dr. Vijay Vad MD talks about Diet : The good news is - Essential Fatty Acids - or abbreviated here to EFA's appear to “turn-off” the body's inflammatory response. Our bodies cannot produce these EFA's – we need to take them in our diet - so consuming foods such as Cold Water fish - esp, salmon,

Flaxseed, dark leafy green vegetables, Olive Oil, Avocados, Nuts will help support the body's ability to turn off that inflammatory response . You may also take Omega3's - an EFA - in the form of a supplement.

Protect yourself from cold, damp weather conditions. A gentle Yoga Asana practice daily which will loosen stiff joints, build strength and improve flexibility .

Sarah Lie in "Ayurveda " - feels sluggish digestion – is a critical factor in this disease ; suggests reducing Ama – undigested toxins . Eat warm foods, rice soups – spices such as garlic, ginger, cumin, coriander , drinks lots of water especially hot tea & ginger tea east before 7 pm at night – and fast after that until the next day .

Hypertension - Ayurveda healing caused by an unbalanced Pita dosha

Following a Pita pacifying program will help controlling high blood pressure.

- First thing in the morning drink Honey Water on an empty stomach (1 tsp of Honey and 5-6 drops of Cider Vinegar to a cup of hot water). Then drink 1 cup of Mango juice – 1 hour later drink ½ cup of warm milk with a pinch of cardamom and nutmeg plus 1 tsp of Ghee.

Avoid all salty foods, smoking and drinking alcohol, avoid working or exercising outside in the heat of the day. Self-massage is recommended - Rub a little ghee on your temples and soles of your feet during the day. There are many other self massage techniques that are very helpful.

Practice meditation, pranayama and asana's daily. Use Shitali breath. Moon salutations and the corpse pose - avoid inversions.

Also Shirodhara –is performed only by an Ayurvedic practitioner - where warm oil is poured over the third eye. Adjust your lifestyle to minimize any physical and or emotional stresses.

The Relaxation response is the greatest healing tool for Hypertension & Cardiac Disease. Dr. Dean Ornish showed 30 years ago that Coronary Artery disease could be reversed by following a program of : a diet – low in fat, consisting of fruits and vegetable, whole grains, legumes and Soy products ( VEGAN diet). This combined with gentle exercise like walking and Yoga – stretching, breathing, meditation and visualization; also love and social support – feeling the support of a community.

Good Circulation and good health are intimately connected- if the circulation is poor- the cells of the body do not get the Oxygen and the Nutrients needed to function effectively. If the circulation is sluggish the energy drops – frequently then our physical ,emotional and mental responses to life turn negative.

Osteoporosis Ayurvedic Healing

In this condition - Vata kosha is out of balance.

Diet: Avoid eating any red meat, fermented foods like yeast in bread & beer, no coffee - a Vegetarian diet is best.

Sarah Lie in "Ayurveda" suggests a Vegetarian diet is best with no meat -

Eat Sesame seeds every day – these are rich in calcium Also sea vegetables, quinoa, parsley, hazelnuts, cow's, goats and soya milk or products like soft cheeses, butter and ghee should be part of your regular diet.

A glass of Almond milk with a pinch of cardamom, ginger powder, and saffron can be taken.

The Herb-Shataveri contains natural precursors to the hormone estrogen which improves the body's ability to metabolize calcium. This needs to be obtained from an Ayurvedic Practitioner.

Exercise is also vital – walking or swimming and Yoga Postures guided by a competent Yoga teacher/Therapist. "Walking is an ideal companion to Yoga – the tranquilizing effect of moderate, rhythmic exercise decreases pain – the movement of weight bearing aspects of walking improve joint health."

Walking can take you outdoors – in touch with nature – the greatest of all healers – uplifting the mind and the Spirit - Be in the moment and walk with Awareness around you " says Suza Francina

**POSTURE \*\*\*so important in Aging and for all these conditions of aging**

In aging the head begins to come forward and the shoulders round – we want to do our best to reverse this effect on the posture.

Posture affects every system of the body – bones , joints, muscles, tendons, nerves, endocrine system – glands & hormones, the cardiovascular and respiratory

Lengthening the Spine to create space between the Vertebrae is vital to our health. Yoga nourishes the spinal disks- the shock absorbers between the vertebrae can herniate and compress nerves. Without movement the disks of the Spine gradually shrink = that is why the body loses height .

Nourishing the spine By stretching , lengthening and moving the spine in all directions – forward and backward, sideways and twisting – brings fresh blood, Oxygen and nutrients into the spongy disks between the vertebrae - If the disks are not nourished they shrink and lose elasticity !

If the chest is collapsed – the diaphragm barely moves and the lungs cannot fill fully- this prevents the cardiovascular system from returning the blood to the heart efficiently.

If the abdomen and chest are compressed The Lymphatic vessels, arteries and veins serving the vital organs - heart & lungs, Liver , kidneys' may be constricted – having good posture allows more room for all our internal organs to function optimally. - thus improving our overall health.

## ASANAS for Healthy Aging and Benefits

Yoga Asana's enhance energy and boost wellness which encourages Healthy Aging. It is important for participants to know that stiffness is not a permanent condition – if Yoga is practiced consistently the stiffness will leave .

I.D.E.A. suggests - Not holding static poses - as they often are more painful , so flowing –or moving in and out of the poses is best . This encourages synovial fluid to be secreted in the joints - lubricating the joints and decreasing painful friction. - USE as many props as needed to be comfortable !

Dr. Karl Knopf in “ Stretching for +50 “states - a holding time of 30 seconds at maximum is good for this group.

John Schlorholtz suggests creating a flow of activities during a class – with periodic repetition of particular activities – “repetition of an exercise or pose during a class allows people to benefit in a number of ways : they receive whatever benefits that activity offers more deeply and the activity becomes more ingrained in their memory.”

Balance Poses – very important as we age - to prevent falls and feel confident on uneven ground and slippery walkways of winter, build strength in supporting leg . Yoga therapist Neil Pearson recommends that the elderly walk around in bare feet each day to keep the connection between the feet and the brain active and functional . ( keeping proprioceptors active )

According to Suza Francina in “Yoga for Healthy Aging “ –says the 3 essential poses – to be done every day are :

1. Standing Mountain Pose - in bare feet at a wall, then with legs wide apart
2. Sittig on the floor - in sukhasana ( change the cross of the legs ½ way ) - simple cross-legged pose or badda konasana –cobbler soles of feet together .
3. Simply Lie on the floor in Svansana - it will passively stretch the chest muscles and correct a rounded back -\*use a folded blanket under the head

Many also recommend Downward Dog as it builds strength and flexibility in the upper body and stretches the entire back of the body - especially the legs - to be Practiced frequently.

Standing poses can be modified by using lots of props -using the wall, blocks, chairs – building up strength -and openness in the hips and shoulders Using the wall can also help with balance – for more elderly seniors it can ensure safety in standing poses . Even planks can be modified – using the wall or grounding at the knee rather than the feet .

Inversions - - very beneficial - as it increases blood flow to the brain and prevents death of brain cells. Inversions should be modified for aging students For Osteoporosis students you want to avoid hyperextension of the neck and any weight –bearing on the neck. We can reverse the effects of gravity on the body – and especially free up the internal organs by practicing inversions.

Inversion poses - Modifications can be used such as in wide Leg Forward Bend – where head is low but can hang free or rest on a block, also Shoulder stand using a chair and bolster fully supported or Vaparita Karani - also a safe partial inversion for +50 Yoga students. In Viparita Karani - the blood collects in the pelvis and then spills over like a waterfall to the heart – flushing out the Cardiac Vessels. This pose gently stretch's the heart muscle and cardiac vessels that supply the heart- this increased flow to the heart helps prevent arterial blockages .

Supported bridge and Legs up the wall can also help regulate blood pressure

Dr. Krishan Raman states ‘Blood flow to the brain may be 1/3 of what it was at age 25 which is one factor that leads to senility ’Inversions will greatly increase the blood flow – helping keep brain cells nourished with Oxygen and nutrients “ .

“ Whenever the head is below the heart- we permit circulation to the upper body to increase without putting a strain on the heart . Inversions bring emotional balance and mental clarity - they refresh and rejuvenate the whole body” says Geeta Iyengar on Inversions

Other equipment can be also so supportive and beneficial for Yoga Asana's - such as Chairs - many poses can be adapted into sitting positions that can be performed with chairs , Yoga ties - to extend the limbs, ties can be held in the hand - also blocks , bolsters and blankets will assist with modifications .

Even elderly and frail adults can participate in Yoga from wheelchairs – using simple arm movements and breathing , meditation -

Pure Restorative Poses are very useful to reduce the effects of stress in the body . Lying with Props supporting the body - Allows participants to just let go to create opening in the body ( often opening blockages and releaseing blocked chakras. The feeling of support and comfort that are created will induce the relaxation response.

Mudra's can also be used – by all levels of the Senior population – hand postures - - improve circulation and flexibility of the hands & wrists – and they represent energy flows.

Savasana - our ultimate letting go - a practice for death - Here we integrate all that we have done in a practice - and come into physical and mental stillness. As we age we become more aware of our mortality

Why is Yoga ideal for older adults ? We are at this great stage of life where we have more time and we can begin to move away from the material world and pursue enlightenment – a celebration and an opportunity to reach deeper into ourselves – growing in wisdom, compassion and joy.

Yoga is non-competitive- Yoga poses help us to breathe more deeply, release tension from the body.

Yoga increases alertness, relaxation, steadiness and comfort , it enhances energy and boosts wellness all this will assist with Healthy Aging.

We cannot predict what will happen in life or control it - but Yoga gives us inner strength and confidence to absorb inevitable stresses. Yoga also gives us a sense of well-being – and we will make better choices as a result.

John Schlorholtz says “ Everyone’s personality and process of aging is unique - Ayurveda helps us get past the vision of aging as merely a time of decline and loss – instead allows us to see aging as a change - of state that provides new possibilities as well as challenges “

Geeta Iyengar states in The New Yoga for Healthy Aging -

“Yoga is a gift for Older people. One who studies Yoga in the later years gains not only health and happiness, but also freshness of mind since Yoga gives one a bright outlook on life. One can look forward to a more healthful future rather than looking back into the past. With Yoga, a new life begins even if started later –Yoga is a re-birth which teaches one to face the rest of one’s life happily, peacefully and courageously. “

Lillias Folan writes:

”As we get older, it can be easy to give into hopelessness as we finally recognize our mortality. But when we understand that our afternoon and sunset years have value and a purpose all their own , we gain a new appreciation for these years. Suddenly we desire to live them for all they are worth ! I have found to make the most of the second half of my life, I’ve had to stop being afraid of looking inward . When we become willing to stop, be reflective, and look within, we find that each of us has many layers to ourselves that we’ve never had time to explore. The later years offer a perfect opportunity to change our focus from the external, material and physical worlds to that which is unseen and harder to perceive. “

In Conclusion I would like to say that the whole system of Ayurveda as addressed in this paper which includes diet, Yoga Asana’s, Pranayama, Meditation and Yoga Philosophy can enhance the life of the aging population so much - It is a great gift that I wish to share with all Baby boomers - Zoomers, +50 age adults ,Seniors – whatever you wish to call this group.

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