

## HUFFINGTON POST, SEPTEMBER 2012

September is National Yoga Month, featuring Yoga health benefits and resources. Numerous studies suggest that Yoga can help relieve health problems such as back pain, high blood pressure, breast cancer, obesity, sleep problems, sexual dysfunction, and mental illness. Now research reports that Yoga may help benefit kids with autism.

Autism is a developmental disability due to a neurological disorder that appears during the first three years of life. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), autism affects 1 in every 88 children in the U.S., a 78 percent increase since 2007.

A study published in the August online issue of the journal *Nature* suggests autism may be linked to genetic changes in older fathers. As a man ages he's more likely to pass on mutations to his children, increasing the chances for autism and other mutation-linked diseases.

### **Yoga May Help School Kids With Autism**

A 2012 study published in the *American Journal of Occupational Therapy* found Yoga helped improve school performance and sustained attention in children with autism.

Researchers in New York assigned schoolchildren with autism either to a daily Yoga program or a standard routine (control). The daily Yoga program, "Get Ready to Learn," was conducted in classrooms for 16 weeks. The therapeutic Yoga-based curriculum included Yoga breathing exercises, movement sequences and relaxation.

The participants behaviors were assessed with standardized measures before and after the study. The researchers found that students in the Yoga program had significant improvement in teacher ratings of behavior compared to the control group.

"This study demonstrates that use of daily classroom-wide Yoga interventions has a significant impact on key classroom behaviors among children with autism-spectrum disorder (ASD)," the study authors write.

## **Yoga Relaxation May Help Improve Autism Symptoms**

A 2011 pilot study published in the *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine* suggested Yoga relaxation, dance and music therapy helped treat behavioral problems and other autism symptoms.

Researchers in Hartford, Conn. administered a multimodal program to 24 children with autism aged 3 to 16 years for eight weeks. The Yoga, dance, and music therapy program was based on the relaxation response.

The participants behaviors were assessed with the Behavioral Assessment System for Children, Second Edition (BASC-2) and the Aberrant Behavioral checklist (ABC). The researchers found that core features of autism measured on the BASC-2 significantly changed.

"A movement-based, modified RR program, involving Yoga and dance, showed efficacy in treating behavioral and some core features of autism, particularly for latency-age children," the study authors wrote.

### **Yoga Programs for Kids With Autism**

Information about Yoga for autism can be found at [Get Ready to Learn](#) and [Samarya Center Integrated Movement Therapy](#).