

# 'Yoga for Healthy Lower Backs' specialist back-care course outcomes in Cornwall

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## Introduction

- A 313-participant RCT published in the *'Annals of Internal Medicine'* in 2011 has found yoga to be an effective treatment for patients with non-specific low back pain.<sup>[1]</sup>
- NICE guidelines recommend a group exercise programme (biomechanical, aerobic, mind-body or a combination of approaches) within the NHS as a first step to managing low back pain.<sup>[2]</sup> Yoga for healthy lower backs (YHLB) courses would fit the mind-body category as is mentioned in the long guidelines.
- Further information, including details of research, courses and the YHLB institute can be found at [www.yogaforbacks.co.uk](http://www.yogaforbacks.co.uk)

## Methods

49 patients have been taught on one-off 12 week YHLB courses in Cornwall between November 2011 and July 2015.

Results have been obtained from the 23 participants who completed all pre and post course questionnaires.

The outcome measure questionnaires used were:

- Roland Morris Disability Questionnaire (RMDQ)
- Visual analogue score (VAS) for pain
- Bournemouth back pain score (BBPS)



## Results

Mean class attendance rate = 10/12

Average score difference post YHLB course....

RMDQ:

- **58% improvement** in daily function
- **3 point** score improvement
- **6.1 point** score improvement for participants with a pre-course score of 7 or more

VAS for pain:

- **57% reduction** in pain perception

BBPS:

- **52% reduction** in restriction of physical, mental and social function
- **63% improvement in coping / managing back pain by themselves.**

Fig. 1 graph showing score changes on RMDQ and VAS comparing pre-yoga course intervention and after the 12 week yoga course intervention



## Discussion

- YHLB teachers are taught to recognise red flags and know how/when to refer back to the GP or hospital.
- The course provides a biopsychosocial approach to back pain – physical poses, relaxation techniques and group support result in fewer days off work due to back pain.
- Yoga treats patients holistically, and addresses pre-existing co-morbidities.
- YHLB is patient-centred & community based.
- YHLB students feel that they have learnt skills and tools to self-manage and prevent their back pain.
- The YHLB book and CD aid participants with practicing techniques at home.
- *Spine journal* has shown YHLB to be cost-effective in an NHS setting.<sup>[3]</sup>



## Future

Development of implementation models for integrating YHLB courses into NHS back pain care pathways, alongside GP care