

Yoga for Better Balance & Mobility

OLLI Eight-week Course, Spring 2024

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Recommended Props

- yoga mat
- two 9x6x4 yoga blocks
- yoga blanket or thick towel
- 10' yoga strap

Class Dates & Time

This is an eight-week course that meets 9:30-11:00 AM Tuesdays, from February 27-April 16 in the Illinois room.

Course Description

This hatha yoga course is a series of complete practices that will help to increase mobility and flexibility, and promote better posture and balance. Incorporating self-myofascial release and other movement skills, you will be guided on how to sit, stand, and move better in your body with less strain, stress, or fatigue; bring more fluid to the tissues for greater comfort and ease of movement; and strengthen the major muscle groups that move your body. Better posture, balance, flexibility, and mobility help us to catch ourselves if we trip or lose our balance, thereby preventing injury and falls.

Week 1: You're grounded! Build a solid foundation, from the bottom up.

Allow yourself to be tethered to the earth by gravity, while at the same time grounding yourself with intention by mindfully “planting” yourself to the surface beneath you. Begin to train yourself to feel the connection of your body parts in space (*i.e.*, proprioception).

Week 2: Coast in neutral: A neutral pelvis is a happy pelvis.

Sitting, standing, and moving with our pelvis tipped too far forward or back can create back pain, neck and shoulder strain, a weak core, restricted breathing, poor digestion, and more. A neutral pelvis allows the bones to stack, helps to relieve pain, minimizes unnecessary muscle engagement or strain, and provides a foundation for good posture and better balance.

Week 3: What a CoreAgeous Body! Improve core strength.

What exactly is the “core”? And why is it important for good posture while seated or standing? How does the core support better balance? The core comprises all of the abdominal muscles, the pelvic region, low and mid back, and the hip complex. Learn to recruit core muscles to hold the body upright without back, shoulder, and neck strain.

Week 4: EnCore!

When we have core awareness and strength, we move ourselves with more control, ease, and confidence. In this continued exploration of core strength, learn skills for better balance, body awareness, and fall prevention.

Week 5: Love your curves! Keep the spine supple with safe and healthy rotation.

Whether we think about it or not, we twist our bodies in different ways every day. Most of the time we probably don't give twisting much thought, which can lead to pain, accidents, or injury. Safe spinal rotation is important to keep the vertebrae, the disks, and the surrounding muscles and connective tissues strong, healthy, and lubricated.

Week 6: Head and shoulders above the rest – Unwreck tech-neck and forward-head posture.

Forward-head posture seems to be an epidemic. A stiff neck, shoulders rounded forward, and slumping in the upper back all contribute to forward-head posture. This extra strain and weight on the cervical and thoracic spine (neck and upper back) contribute not only to a stiff neck and shoulders and poor posture, but also put pressure on the chest and lung cavity, and can lead to vertebral fractures and/or fall risk. Explore various ways to help correct forward-head posture through yoga and other movements targeted to these vulnerable areas.

Week 7: Just breathe... Find freedom in your breath to move with more ease.

Freeing the breath helps to expand our ribcage and lungs to oxygenate all of our cells. The breath also helps to regulate our nervous system and can help alter the heart rate and blood pressure. Open the tissues in the ribcage, chest, back, and shoulders to create deeper, more resilient respiration.

Week 8 - Putting it all together

You've learned a bunch of yoga. Now what? Integrating yoga and mindful movement into daily life is not only easy, but is a prescription for aging with resiliency. In the final week, explore ways to incorporate yoga, movement, and other skills learned in this course to move through life with more confidence and ease.

Optional Reading

Research Articles:

[Older Adult Falls Data](#)

[The effects of yoga compared to active and inactive controls on physical function and health related quality of life in older adults- systematic review and meta-analysis of randomised controlled trials](#)

[Yoga Practice for The Elderly: Good Choice to Avoid Falls](#)

[Adapted yoga to improve physical function and health-related quality of life in physically-inactive older adults: a randomised controlled pilot trial](#)

[Yoga for Healthy Aging: Science or Hype?](#)

Other Reading:

Yoga for Healthy Aging: A Guide to Lifelong Well-Being, by Baxter Bell and Nina Zolotow

Yoga as Medicine: The Yogic Prescription for Health and Healing, by Yoga Journal and Timothy McCall

About Me

Kim Green has been practicing yoga and meditation since the 1990s. She has studied yoga for bone health and aging extensively and enjoys teaching a variety of yoga styles, self-myofascial release, and meditation. She has a particular interest in teaching yoga for strength, balance, and healthy connective tissues (including the bones). Kim teaches group yoga and self-myofascial release classes, workshops, and themed courses, and works individually with private clients. She is a Certified Registered Yoga Teacher (RYT-200; currently pursuing RYT-500), as well as a Certified Level II Reiki practitioner.