

# Returning to Yoga Following Injury



**"Working with a knowledgeable hand therapist can make the difference between success and failure in complex hand surgical cases. The therapist extends the continuum of our care, as well as functioning as coach and trainer for our patients."**

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*Ahimsa* is a core principle of doing no harm to yourself or others through thoughts, words and actions.

In recent years, more people have started doing yoga. Women are more likely to do yoga than men. Around 1 out of every 6 people practices yoga regularly.

Yoga includes many different poses. Some are very simple, like standing still. Others are harder and push your body and mind. After an injury to your upper extremity (shoulder, elbow, wrist, hand), it can be hard to get your flexibility back. Common injuries that make it hard to return to yoga include broken bones, arthritis, ligament tears or nerve damage.



*Returning to yoga after an injury can be difficult*

## Benefits of yoga

- Helps reduce anxiety
- Improves mood and lowers stress
- One of the most popular self-care activities in the US

## How can a hand therapist help me get back to yoga after injury?

A hand therapist can show you how to change poses to protect a painful joint and watch you so they can teach you how to stretch safely. They can provide exercises to make your hand and arm stronger and also help make a plan to slowly return to yoga. You might start with chair yoga or hands-free yoga. You can also use tools like blocks, straps or a wall to help until your ready to fully return.

## How can I protect my upper extremity during yoga?

- Ask your instructor for easier versions of poses and don't push past pain.
- Use your core muscles to keep your spine steady.
- Make sure your body is lined up correctly in each pose.
- Lean on your forearms instead of your hands for down dog or plank positions.
- Spread your fingers to spread the weight across your hand. You can also rest on your forearms instead.
- Keep your elbows close to your ribs and avoid bending them too far backward.
- Try different styles of yoga to keep your body challenged.

## How long does it take to return to yoga after a wrist injury?

Studies show it takes about five months to return to yoga after surgery for a broken wrist (called a distal radius fracture).

Goyal N, Tsai AG, Li J, Wysocki RW. Return to Yoga Rates Are High After Volar Plating of Distal Radius Fractures. *Hand (N Y)*. 2021 Jan;16(1):110-114.