

# Hot Yoga - Best Workout Ever or Too Risky for the Average Gym-Goer?

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Since “Guru to the stars” Bikram Choudhury developed the concept in the ‘70s, “hot yoga” has remained popular among a wide range of workout aficionados. But is Bikram yoga worth the extra sweat?

## **What is Hot Yoga?**

Hot Yoga is exactly what it sounds like – yoga done in a very hot room. Temperatures are usually set between 90 and 105 degrees Fahrenheit (sometimes even higher) but the real challenge is the humidity – ranging from 40-60%. Classes can last anywhere from 45 to 90 minutes, and what looks like a series of effortless, flowing poses can turn into a grueling sweat to the finish deathmatch with the practitioner’s own need to collapse in a puddle.

## **Hot Yoga Benefits According to Practitioners**

Those who love hot yoga say it’s a perfect way to release toxins from the body, improve the health of the skin, enhance mental and physical health, promote mental clarity and concentration, ease back problems, cure asthma, minimize heart disease, and stabilize blood glucose levels – the usual long list of cure-all-ills one sees from super fans of any discipline. But does hot yoga really deliver?

## **Does Science Support Hot Yoga Claims?**

A 2011 study found that 20 sessions of Bikram yoga done over an 8 week time frame “increased mindfulness, reduced perceived stress, and improved balance and flexibility” (the same things regular yoga is supposed to do.) a 2012 study concluded that hot yoga provides no real effect on pulmonary function or aerobic capacity (things yoga isn’t really designed to do anyway.) In 2013, a very small study did seem to show some correlation between intense hot yoga sessions done by middle aged persons with obesity and an improvement in glucose tolerance. However, there’s no science to support the “sweating out of toxins” claim that is common with Bikram Yoga enthusiasts.

## **The Bottom Line**

For clients who really, really like a good sweat without high impact forms of exercise, hot yoga may be a way to get it. However, it can also lead to overstretching, heat exhaustion, and dehydration, so if you plan to offer such classes ensure that you are teaching safety. Make sure your [yoga insurance](#) is also up to date in case a student pushes themselves too far!