

The War Related Illness & Injury Study Center (WRIISC) at VA Palo Alto Health Care System offers mind/body classes as part of their clinical care program for Veterans. Classes include practice of poses from yoga, Pilates, and other gentle forms of exercise to improve strength and flexibility, and help reduce pain, fatigue, and stress. Emphasis is placed on breath control and core strength. Participation in these classes is dependent upon provider referral and clearance from the Veteran's primary care physician to begin such a program.



This program is offered as part of a complementary and alternative medicine pilot program to integrate the health of the mind, body, and spirit. Yoga has been practiced for more than 5,000 years and millions of Americans are enjoying its health benefits. Pilates was originally developed during World War I by Joseph Pilates, while he worked in a British military hospital. He called it "Contrology" to emphasize the idea that the mind controls the muscles and focuses on strengthening the core muscles which helps prevent further injury.

Many people think that yoga is simply about stretching but it is much, more.



While stretching is certainly one part of yoga, the practice of yoga creates balance in the body and mind by developing strength, flexibility, and improving circulation. Yoga body positions called poses provide specific physical benefits when practiced with controlled breathing. The poses can be done quickly in succession, creating heat in the body through movement or more slowly to increase stamina and perfect the alignment of the body.

What type of classes does the WRIISC offer?

The WRIISC will offer group classes that work best with the Veterans signed up for that particular session. We will divide our Veterans into groups based on recommendations from their primary care physician and provide two types of classes:

Mat Class: This class uses poses from several styles of yoga as well as Pilates exercises and will focus on movement synchronized with breath. This is an active approach which uses a series of poses to build strength and flexibility as well as develop awareness of how

body and mind can work together to reduce pain and stress. This class will use blocks, chairs and straps to support the development of strength, flexibility and, balance.

Chair Class: For those just beginning their exercise program or with physical limitations we will provide a set of yoga poses and simple exercises adapted for use while sitting in a chair or standing and using the chair for support.

Both classes will provide a guided relaxation segment at the end of class.

What are the benefits of Mind/Body training?

Yoga has developed over thousands of years to help the body and mind work together to support overall health. The benefits of yoga are far-reaching and regular practice can result in:

- Improved muscle tone and fitness
- Improved flexibility and balance
- Improved circulation
- Reduction in feelings of anxiety and depression
- Reduction in muscle and joint pains
- Improved sleep and energy level



Do I need special clothing?

Most people find that stretchable cotton clothing which is comfortable for movement – such as what you might wear to walk or work out – is fine. In general avoid overly tight or loose clothing or clothing with buttons, zippers or belts as these can make some postures uncomfortable. Yoga is generally done with bare feet but you may wear shoes socks if you are more comfortable.

What do I need for class?

The WRIISC program staff will provide each veteran in mat based classes with a yoga mat to keep for personal use. Props such as straps, blocks and blankets will also be provided for use in all classes.

Veterans who enroll in the yoga program should bring the following with them to each class:

- Bottle of water
- Small towel – such as a hand towel
For chair based classes Veterans may want to bring a larger towel to pad or cover their chair during class
- A pair of socks to wear during the ending resting period of class



VA Palo Alto Health Care System Palo Alto Division Campus



Classes are held in various locations.
Veterans are asked to arrive 10-15 minutes early for class

For more information about the location and dates of the Mind/Body program for Veterans please contact

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www.warrelatedillness.va.gov



Mind/Body Classes Offered at the VA Palo Alto Health Care System



The War Related Illness & Injury
Study Center (WRIISC)
at VA Palo Alto Health Care System



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