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Welcome to Supplementing Health, a podcast presented by Advanced Orthomolecular Research. We are all about applying evidence based and effective dietary lifestyle and natural health product strategies for your optimal health. In each episode, we will feature very engaging clinicians and experts from the world of functional and naturopathic medicine to help achieve our mission to empower people to lead their best lives naturally.

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[01:29] *Cassy Price:* Welcome back to Supplementing Health. I am so happy to have you all tuning in today. A fun fact about me is that I am a huge yoga lover, however, I am not going to lie when I first started on my yogi journey, I was very surprised by what an intense workout it can actually be. There is this perception around yoga that it is a leisurely stretching activity which is not the case in a serious practice. Now that being said, stretching out has so many benefits that today I am super excited to be joined by Christine, an avid yogi and a trained instructor, who has been practicing for more than twenty years, to discuss the benefits of incorporating yoga into your daily activities particularly in this case for vascular health. Thank you so much for joining me today Christine.

[02:11] *Christine:* Well, thank you very much Cassy.

[02:14] *Cassy Price:* So, before we dive into the health benefits of yoga, would you mind sharing a bit about how you got into yoga and the history of your practice?

[02:22] *Christine:* Absolutely. Well, I got into yoga as a dancer when I was in university. It was sort of framed to me as doing a warmup sun salutation and some centring work before going on stage and I connected a lot with that, and I think I studied a couple of different kinds of yoga at that time because it wasn't really a popular thing at that point. There were just a few people that I knew that were doing it which is strange to think of that now. The style of yoga that I fell more into and studied a little deeper which shapeshifted a lot of things for me was ashtanga yoga. I think it has changed so much and been such a diverse journey that it is not the only way that I practice now but it has been an incorporation of a lot of different styles and movement and meditations that I have learned over the years. Ashtanga yoga was interesting to me because it was quite a physical practice and I was a dancer, so it spoke to me right away and I was also quite young and mobile and I was excited about the idea of where it came from and that the practice was known to be something that you take on for your personal growth and not necessarily something that you have to do exactly the way other people did. That is how it was framed to me at that time.

[03:46] *Christine*: I went to India and I studied that style of practice. Yoga has its roots over five thousand years ago but specifically this practice has gained more insight in popularity from about the 1900's and on and specifically in the 60's, 70's and 80's it really drew in some western students to go and study with a man called Pattabhi Jois. His teacher was Krishna Macharya who claims to have found this practice in an academic library in India where the practice was written on palm leaves, which are not to be found anymore so some people don't believe that is true because there is no way to go and find them and read them for ourselves at this point. There were two identifications in that style of yoga and what they were trying to pull together and it was this practice of yoga therapy that stemmed more from Ayurveda, the sister science to yoga to the practice of the eight limbs of yoga which is what the word ashtanga means but it has more of its routes in more of a therapeutic meditative and spiritual alignment of practice. The ashtanga part didn't really flourish and expand until Krishna Macharya studied in the Himalayan Mountains in a cave with a teacher for years and bought back this secret information that at that point was taught from teacher to student.

[05:27] Pattabhi Jois and Krishna Macharya found these papers that were on palm leaves and it stated that you should practice yoga with this concept of vinyasa, which was a breathing to movement practice, which is also what they thought the way into practicing these eight limbs and this deeper spiritual practice that a man or woman that doesn't know these scriptures from seventeen hundred years ago called the yoga sutra. It's a combination. I think they said they found both of those documents at the same time and gained the insight that that is how you should practice yoga but also Krishna Macharya as a teacher was a yoga therapist and he was known for teaching quite a few of the greats of yoga that we now know in the west like Iyengar and his son Desikachar and Indra Devi who is the first female practitioner who studied with Krishna Macharya. He was known for having a stern approach and there are some stipulations that some of that work was also stemming from military actions of learning wrestling and gymnastics in the more British reign time in India so there are a lot of different ways in which it has been compiled together since its original from five thousand years ago as scriptures were practiced for particularly male priests.

[06:57] So, it has evolved a lot and what I loved about reading more and studying the work of Krishna Macharya is that there was some sternness and some directive that sounded like a lot of correlations between that military practice or development of strength to persevere in great suffering and to be as strong minded physically as possible. It is also noted that along the way that was also originally intended for young boys. So, it has adapted a lot over the years and today we see these different variations of practice because Krishna Macharya was known for teaching each of his students a little bit differently so each of those more world-renowned yoga teachers that were more responsible for spreading yoga throughout the west also Pattabhi Jois was the only one who had that many aspects of connecting breath and moment through Vinyasa. It is quite a physical practice of moving up and down from the ground and it is adaptable for many different people but sometimes depending on the teacher or the way it is presented it doesn't seem that way as there is some challenging movements in it and it is quite a demanding practice whereas Iyengar kind of bought this element of props and yoga therapeutics and making yoga approachable for all people and it goes on from there.

[08:29] That is the lineage that I have studied and there are also different sects of yoga that have come from different perspectives as well but that is the one that I studied particularly in. I have interest in combining them all together at this point and using a lot of props but also using the breath flow and some other things.

[08:50] *Cassy Price*: So, as you alluded to there is growing popularity of yoga in the Western Hemisphere and with that has come a multitude of styles for novice yogis to choose from. How does someone decide if they want to try havi-kosh over ashtanga practice or something on the more unique side such as some of these aerial yoga or things like that?

[09:13] *Christine*: Yeah, well that is kind of the thing. Things have diversified and westernised and different forms of yoga have come from different parts of India as well so there are lots of different tracks and lots of different reasons why a beginner would study different kinds of yoga. Most people know of yoga to be Hatha Yoga which is the umbrella of all postural yoga so all moving forms of yoga. Ashtanga yoga is Hatha yoga so it can be kind of confusing to read through some of the names for a practitioner. Then we also have styles of yoga like yin yoga that comes from a more dour perspective which physically is meant to create whole postures longer and remain hold and not move up and down or not move so much at all and can be a more meditative practice and also physically it is meant to affect the deeper connective tissue and the nervous system in quite a profound way. So, as far as someone finding yoga, I think the best way to come in at it is the personalised feel or what are you drawn to.

[10:19] Another style of yoga is Kundalini Yoga which maybe we can say has more spiritual chanting sort of interesting way of doing postures where they are more moving and more energetic which pushes you up to a point of will where you are just repeating one movement with breath over and over again until you have reached that point where you want to stop and you kind of find the will inside to keep going. That is an interesting practice as well but so different. Then goat yoga. What else do we have? We have combination yoga of yin yoga mixed with yin yoga which tends to be a more physical moving variation of the practice blended with that closer to the ground quiet. If you are looking for a more destressing yoga which can of course be very profound with vascular health and reduce blood pressure and all kinds of things like reducing blood sugar and cholesterol so when you are healthy and you want to add that exercise element of it, ashtanga and vinyasa yoga can be very great. If you are more looking for that side of things to be more restorative with more meditative aspects of it looking for that stress reduction you might be looking for restorative practice and practice with a lot of props where again you are not moving but you are very comfortable most of the time and directed by your breath to settle in and stretch lightly in the body and yin and yoga nidra are also practices like that.

[11:55] Then practices like goat yoga and even just being in a class all together when and if we can do that is community building and has elements of making it fun and more diverse for more people to bring in different kinds of people to the practice to enjoy different elements of it. So, those practices can be very fulfilling as well. Aerial yoga I think is again a very specific kind of yoga, with all these kinds of yoga you want to find a very qualified teacher but aerial yoga is based around the gymnastics appeal and can be quite thrilling for people because if you haven't done anything like that before you can do supported inversions and things like that that are not weight bearing as much but I would say that as a beginner coming to a practice to want to look for a teacher with a style that speaks to you because you want to align and show up. If you are looking for a little fun go and find an aerial yoga class or a goat yoga class and that might stem into a different kind of practice eventually. Whereas if you are looking to do a more spiritual minded practice that is more Kundalini yoga with the chanting and more energetic postures then yin yoga and restorative yoga are more calming and have the element of rejuvenation and relaxation and meditation and more of an exercise in movement and mobility sometimes even like a dance and moving with your breath in ashtanga classes.

[13:41] I personally like the blend. We are in the fusion land with a lot of things these days and I think you can gain a lot from a practice that is going to specifically take time to warm up the body in a very neutral mobility way and settle your energy with some breathing and moving a little bit more in the body and coming down to a nice finishing part of the practice where you focus on getting still and relaxing more. That is probably the place where people will gain the most benefitted neutral look at those styles.

[14:17] *Cassy Price*: Absolutely. For me I know with the pandemic and all it has bought with it, one of the things that I miss most about practicing in a studio is the hot classes. I really enjoy how it allows you to get deeper into the poses and just the added element of challenge that it adds. Can you speak to what kind of benefits doing a hot class brings compared to a regular or a cold class?

[14:44] *Christine*: Sure. It is a question I am asked a lot. I think there are definite camps like the different styles of yoga for the people who love it and eat it up and feel like they thrive in that environment and there are people who really feel awful and also people who should avoid doing hot yoga, you know with certain conditions and chronic illnesses. I think the thing too is that heat obviously warms up the body so it might feel as though you can stretch deeper which again has its positives and negatives. If you are a very tight person, it might wake you up and your energy and you are working really hard and you are creating a total cleansing of your metabolism and your whole being and it really feels like you are doing a great job and you feel like you have more accessibility to some of those postures. The heat in general in certain kinds of practices is derived from the inside out. There are certain kinds of practices where for many people it is a little bit redundant to have the extra heat from the outside and from the inside.

[15:46] Sometimes you will find more moderate classes in hot studios where they are not as pushing the vinyasa which is like moving up and down from the ground and moving quickly and strong forceful breaths because you already have the heat from the outside, so it is a balance of both. I am not an avid hot practitioner. I have worked in a couple of hot studios and I am one of those people who is more relaxed in a cool room but again there is that camp of people who really excel and love to death that style. I guess that is different. It is different thing when you practice outside on a hot sunny day because same thing you are risking over sun exposure to get that same amount of heat, or you can't really get that same amount of heat and humidity as you can in a studio. I can see why people would really miss that but it is not really replicable another way apart from finding that internal heat yourself or often I will have a light heater on in my room especially in the winter months in Calgary just so you feel more comfortable or relaxed or if you feel stressed out because you are cold and your body is moving against you it won't make you want to come back for sure, right? That is where it has its perks for sure.

[17:06] *Cassy Price*: Yes, especially in the winter months around here definitely. It is a nice reprieve from the cold weather. You had mentioned that there are certain conditions that should avoid doing hot yoga, what are some of those conditions?

[17:20] *Christine*: Well definitely I think the thing is that a lot of people come to yoga. Some people come very healthy. Some people think they are very healthy, and some people have undiagnosed chronic illness or are just starting to deal with their chronic illness. There are inflammatory diseases that you would want to avoid being in hot conditions like rheumatoid arthritis if you have had a heart attack or high blood pressure. It wouldn't be the first place that I would start. It wouldn't mean that you would be exempt from doing a hot class ever, right? You would want to discuss it with your doctor, and you would want to make sure that you knew you were in alignment with all the things that you would want to do to take care of yourself. Some things like in inflammation, there are

different camps as well, chronic illnesses like POTS where you already have an extreme shapeshifting of your circulatory system where upping the heat will also encourage your metabolism to work harder too and your heart to beat faster. If you deal with high anxiety, it can to some degree help too but again you have to know how the heat affects you. In yoga there is this concept of Ayurveda which is the sister science behind yoga. It talks about three different constitutions and one of them is Pitta, Vata and Kapha. They say that all of us are within in that personality of those three things.

[19:01] Just naturally there are people who are hotter or more prone to being hot and exasperating their energy and being firm and precise. This is a very simple way of talking about this but just physically they can also have more inflammation in their bodies. They would not be the best people to do hot yoga. They also might be the ones more drawn to it although because of the heat and they want more heat to keep up with that, but it fries them out at the same time. Somebody who maybe needs to get moving and in that hot room you are not really doing up and down postures as much in as strong of a practice so that could really get things going for them if they are more sluggish in their metabolism. Then the one in the middle is Vata which is somebody who is quite wiry and moves like the wind. Vata comes from the element of the wind. Both Vata and Kapha people can really relate to this and you can take it into your own self if you are really hot headed and always have to be go go go go go go, adding more heat or more strenuous yoga practice can bring more of the same and will be enjoyable for a while but it will start to burn you out over time. Whereas there is a balance to that too which might mean not doing it five days a week, right? It might mean balancing your practice by doing one hot practice and doing a couple of other kinds of practices like a yin practice or a balance with an ashtanga class to get your grouping of things. There is some work out there especially with, say if you have had a heart attack or things like that, I would say definitely consult your doctor but the same with any practice really but especially with hot yoga.

[20:59] *Cassy Price*: No, that totally makes sense. Realistically you should be talking to your doctor before you start any new exercise routine because, like you said, you might have something that is undiagnosed that you were unaware of. From a physiological standpoint what are the effects of a regular yoga practice on the body?

[21:18] *Christine*: Well, a regular yoga practice is really, firstly I would say one of the most beautiful benefits is one of the effects that it has on the nervous system. We are a multifunctioning integrated system and as a whole our nervous system is our manager of stress. So, that is going to help us with our vascular health, with our stress levels and all kinds of chronic illness and just basically how we deal in the world with anxiety and depression and that sort of thing. It can really help to almost reset the nervous system. That is a physical connection in our body whether it is just from living and working hard and having stress in your body or living in a pandemic, all these things. The breath especially and the yoga postures as you settle and get still can bring your nervous system in a slower phase where you can move. Your organs function better where your circulatory system works better. It is quite a profound chain of events. Otherwise, apart from improving flexibility and strength there is weight bearing so it increases your fitness level, your bone density level, it helps create awareness of yourself and around others. I think also mental and emotional balance. It improves hormone level and things like blood glucose level, your respiratory function, your metabolism. I guess it goes on and on. It also is a very good practice to help you balance the effects of mental illness, blood pressure issues, cholesterol issues. They are vast. They are vast.

[23:17] *Cassy Price*: That is quite a list.

[23:19] *Christine*: That is quite a list, isn't it? A regular practice is what though for people? When I first came to ashtanga yoga I was told that you practice six days a week I was told at the crack of

dawn, whatever that means to you some people are up at four a.m. or six a.m. without having eaten any food and you go, and you do your practice that way. That is a dedicated practice but for many that is way too much. Way too much physicality. If they have a physical job, right? People can still gain this benefit, definitely from regular practice, but for some regular practice is once or twice a week, especially if that is consistent that is really beautiful and still has some profound effects. So, it doesn't have to be those six days a week. The information that we have now is that it is also exercise. There are different elements like riding your bike in the sunshine where you take deep breathes in and out, all these things balance in a similar way and we can shapeshift our lives to choose the activities or maybe blend our yoga practice in with those. Sometimes I am known for doing a bit of a yoga practice and it leads me into a walk or a run or vice versa. There are lots of ways to gain benefits without thinking you have to do it six days a week. I guess that is what I am trying to say.

[24:43] *Cassy Price*: Yeah. That makes sense. Especially, maybe right now it is a little easier with being less activities to choose from as far as people filling their schedules but in our 'normal' world it can be challenging sometimes to fit in a seventy-five-minute practice every single day, right? Another thing I was curious about was with more people practicing at home, as an instructor, how are you finding it with helping people do adjustments especially beginners that are learning the postures and you want to make sure that they are not hurting themselves by going too deep or not going into the position correctly. How are you finding that and how do you suggest newbies avoid injury?

[25:35] *Christine*: Well, it has been a very interesting ride over the last year and a half or however long we have been in this and I know lots of people were online and noting what their experience was much longer than covid times. What was new to me when the studios started to close and I jumped online right away. I was very used to walking around the room and placing hands on people, with permission of course, and doing slight adjustments and reminders and coming right up to someone and even saying just to them and not to the whole room different elements of alignment to try to stay safe or bringing in a prop. Online what we came up against was the learning curve that it was probably best to have a few props of your own which now you can buy quite cheaply and even second hand like a bolster and a couple of blocks and then you can pull in chairs and your couch and be creative. I sometimes do yoga between a door frame where I can hold either side. I guess that is the thing. Just not be afraid to go slow and listen to your body and to be able to use those props and those modifications.

[26:46] Coming online it is interesting because Zoom for example you have to turn off everyone's mics so there is not a lot of questions and asking except for the beginning and the end but I find that those are very pivotal times to be there a little longer on the call for people because you want to find a teacher that is communicable with that doesn't just disengage or disappear when that is a good time to ask questions. I think anybody that is teaching online yoga is very happy to spend the time doing that or to talk more personally to talk to people about how to modify because where there is a person there is a modification. It is so important to know that yoga is not a generalised practice where you fit yourself into this shape that you see but that instructions are guiding you to place your body in a certain way and look for those alignment cues that are important and pretty much generalised but also guide you into a way of doing a little bit of a time and feeling it out so if it hurts back away.

[27:58] I think what is beautiful about online yoga is that really you can push a lot harder in a studio which is again what people miss the most and the community of being with other people because it really brings out that energy to work hard and you can feel all of those endorphins going, right?

When you are home, you are there by yourself and it seems a little bit lack lustrous, but it is really good in my opinion because it is teaching us that a little goes a long way and that this practice can be years of a journey of understanding and it won't be the same year after year the more you practice. So, start small and start with a class, if you are really mentally like you need to move and you don't like to sit still very long then approach it from that angle. Sometimes we think I must sit and do a meditation class and the person goes crazy the entire time and doesn't want to come back. It is like, hit it up from what it is that you are comfortable with and what you re interested in so if you are interested in more physical moving classes, look for someone who has information on kinaesthetic awareness and alignment safety and use your props.

[29:07] Don't think that you have to do it exactly the way that the picture of the teacher is doing it because then that is your only reference right, what you are seeing is just the way that the teaching is doing it or the idea of the picture of yoga, we are not trying to make shapes for a yoga journal. We are in our own house and it is barely casual, maybe you are in your pyjamas even. Make it about you. You can say "I don't know what that is. I don't think I want to try it today." It is not a cop out or you are not doing a good job. No one is going to judge you on a Zoom call especially. Just let it come slowly over time. You will get hurt a lot less. Often the hurts that come from yoga are from over striving and over pushing, for example something like a hamstring stretch we feel the burn right away when we bend forward because unless you do that in your life you are going to feel that stretch and things are tight in there but also hamstrings need to be strengthened more than they need to be stretched so we get into the deep stretch and say "okay that's it. That burn. That's it." I'm like "if you are feeling that back up." My thought is to say, "think about the pose being five to eight percent."

[30:23] *Cassy Price*: Yeah. That is fantastic advice for sure especially I think if this is your first foray. That is one thing that I really enjoyed about being in studio was all those adjustments because even if you have been doing it a long time there is always something new to learn or your body might be tight because you did something new that week. There is a number of studies that show yoga benefits many aspects of cardiovascular health which you previously mentioned. Are there specific poses that benefit the heart and vascular system that people should be incorporating into their practice if they are doing it on their own?

[31:01] *Christine*: Yeah. I mean originally there was only a handful of postures and then it faded now that there is something like seven thousand postures and then there are even more on top of that because it is movement and exercise, it's stretching, it is fitness, it's spirituality. It is a lot of different things, right? Specifically talking about heart health again it is going to be important to know that if you are a young individual trying to prevent heart issues and be strong in your cardiovascular makeup then it is different advice verses somebody who has had a heart attack or has heart conditions or deals with something like a circulatory issue like low blood pressure, if you know what I mean. The very generalised postures that are good for almost anyone in these situations are some simple breathing exercises for example. Unriyu Proneyam which is a very commonly known breathing exercise which is using ashtanga vinyasa and many other styles of yoga where you are breathing in slowly through your nose. It has been likened to Darth Vader breath. That is a good approach to using that kind of breathing while doing any postures. Standing postures particularly. Working on strength and building that sense of movement of your circulatory system and being strong to take yourself into the world.

[32:29] Postures like Gentle Forward Fold and Twists. There are some that we call heart openers that are opening the muscle of your heart. Like there is a posture for example called Heart Bed where you place a bed or a bolster beneath your shoulder blades and you lay over it which for somebody

who is tight in this area or you can imagine someone who has a hard time breathing or the look of someone who is not confident or rolls their shoulders and it is not always pertaining to that but that feeling of coveting your heart area and sucking it in which is a natural posture for people who sit at a desk. It shortens and clenches a lot of the muscles that we breathe with and when you lay back over that prop or block or critical alignment prop called a black strap, even your pillow on your bed, it just lifts your chest a little it, it is not an inversion it is meant to stretch the muscles that we breathe with and create space all around the heart so the circulation of the breathing and all those muscles are releasing. I would say that that is one of the biggest ones for heart health.

[33:40] Then side body stretches where again you are moving your body to create space into those breathing muscles into those organs as well as postures that create stamina. Creating stamina would be those standing postures or neutral postures like those forward folds or light back bends as long as they are building strength in the back and not over stretching. Also, I think another big one again if your heart is healthy and your body is healthy is that if you could take one thing out of yoga practice that encompasses a lot and all of those things is basically sun salutation. Surya Namaskara A, you can look up on a YouTube video to get five thousand hits on what that is, but a lot of vinyasa classes and kapha classes focus on that as a warmup or energizing the body. You don't have to do very many of them but again if you have low blood pressure or you have any other ailments you may not be someone who is the camp that goes up and down lowering your heart or lowering your hips and coming up quickly. It can be modified to go a little slower or to be adaptable. I am practicing right now with one leg so I know where there is a will there is a way. So, sun salutations are going to increase the flow of your blood flow and increase oxygen coming into your body and be a little bit more cardiovascular work in general than other yoga practices.

[35:15] *Cassy Price*: Fantastic. I really appreciate you taking the time to chat with me today. It has been an amazing conversation and it definitely has me wanting to go practice again. So, if any of our listeners wanted to practice with you, how could they go about doing that?

[35:30] *Christine*: Well, I am currently primarily online right now and I am teaching via Zoom with another instructor friend of mine whose name is Natasha and you can look up my website which is [intergratedbodymindhealing.com](http://intergratedbodymindhealing.com) and I have a whole list of classes that are going to start Monday with a new session of five weeks which is fairly reasonable because it is for the intent of getting people through these hard times. The classes are very diverse focusing on strength and mobility and some classical yoga posture and practices as well as modernised movement and nervous system approach to the practice. After that I am hoping to get outside once that is allowed again and do some yoga in Canmore Park and also the details to those classes are on my website as well.

[36:28] *Cassy Price*: Awesome. Thank you so much again, I really appreciate it and thank you to the listeners who tuned into another episode of Supplementing Health.

*\* \* \* Outro Music \* \* \**

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*[End of episode 37:08]*