

Chair-based yoga programme for older adults with multimorbidity: RCT with embedded economic and process evaluations

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Plain language summary

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Plain language summary

It is common for older adults to have two or more long-term health conditions. These conditions affect quality of life differently, with some people feeling well and others needing healthcare support. The Gentle Years Yoga programme was developed to improve quality of life for older adults, including those with long-term health conditions. We wanted to see how well the programme worked and if it offered good value for money for the NHS.

We tested whether offering a 12-week course of Gentle Years Yoga improved the quality of life and reduced anxiety, depression, loneliness and falls for people aged 65 years and over who had two or more long-term health conditions. We recruited 454 people through general practices across England and Wales, with 240 people selected at random to be invited to take part in the Gentle Years Yoga programme and the other 214 to continue with their usual care and not be offered Gentle Years Yoga. The average age of participants was 74 years, nearly two-thirds were female and the number of long-term health conditions participants had ranged from two to nine (average was three). They completed four questionnaires over a 12-month period. We also interviewed some of the participants and the yoga teachers to find out how the approach worked in practice. The yoga was delivered either face to face or online.

We did not find any significant benefits in terms of quality of life, anxiety, depression, loneliness or falls. At interview, some yoga participants noted no or a modest impact on their health or lifestyle, while others described Gentle Years Yoga as transformative, having substantial impacts and improvements on their physical health and emotional well-being. Because running the yoga classes was relatively inexpensive and some insignificant benefits were seen, the Gentle Years Yoga programme may be good value for money.

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