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Get Out

Take a Water Yoga Class

Sunday, December 26, 2004; Page M07

Whether your sun salutations could rival any professional poser's or you've yet to find Om away from home, water yoga offers a novel way to give body and mind a workout. The practice has many variations, with names like aqua yoga, woga, Yoga Afloat and YOQUA (the last two are trademarked certification programs).

All are based on classic yoga poses and stretches, which are modified for standing in water that is between waist- and chest-high. Why water? It aids balance and is no-impact, making this type of yoga ideal for folks with physical limitations and those who are recovering from injuries. You don't need to know how to swim or even breathe underwater to participate -- most poses involve keeping your head above the surface. (When they don't, instructors can usually teach modifications.)

What to Expect: Once offered mainly at tony tropical resorts, water yoga is getting trendy

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structured much like their land-yoga equivalents: breathing, warm-up exercises, a series of poses and a relaxation period. The difference? You're in a pool -- a standard rec center swimming pool, most likely, though Shanti Yoga of Bethesda has a smaller one heated about 8 degrees warmer, which loosens muscles and helps participants hold poses deeper and longer. The tone of each session depends largely on who's teaching it; some classes focus on fitness, others are more meditative. Speak to the instructor before registering to make sure the class is a good fit.

What to Bring: A swimsuit and a towel.

Cost: \$4 to \$15 per class.

Karen Kullgren

WHERE EAST MEETS WET

Fitness Quest. 11230 Waples Mill Rd., Fairfax. 703-352-2280. \$10 per class; 10 classes for \$75. Instructor Cynthia Bialek trains future teachers nationwide.

George Washington REC Center. 8426 Old Mount Vernon Rd., Alexandria. 703-780-8894. Twenty-six classes cost \$208 for Fairfax County residents, \$218 for nonresidents. This spot features soothing music, and the focus is on fluid movement from pose to pose.

Shanti Yoga. Bethesda. Call for address. 301-654-6759. \$15 per class; six classes for \$72. Teacher Linette Landa started offering water

yoga for pregnant women; as interest rose, she added classes for men and non-pregnant women as well. Sessions have a spiritual bent.

YMCA Upper Montgomery County. 10011 Stedwick Rd., Montgomery Village. 301-948-9622. Full YMCA members

\$4 per class; program members

\$8 per class. Instructor Heather Harris is certified in Yoga Afloat and YOQUA. Her classes tend to be senior-friendly.

Know of a great exercise opportunity in your area? E-mail getout@washpost.com. Include your name, city and daytime phone number.

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