

# Yoga can help runners

Karen Gardner, Frederick NewsPost  
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SPORTS CAN get us out of shape.

So says Eva Rosvold, personal trainer, runner and yoga teacher in Frederick. "It's kind of a weird thing to say, but whatever sport you're doing, you're going to overuse some muscles," she said.

Running, biking, golfing, tennis, skiing and just about any sport involve repetitive movements. Knees, ankles, backs, shoulders and elbows suffer.

"Some muscles get tighter," Rosvold said. To counteract this, there is yoga. Rosvold will teach a Runner's Yoga Workshop on Sunday, Feb. 19, at Sol Yoga in Frederick, from 2-3:30 p.m.

Many athletes are strong, but lack flexibility, Rosvold said. "It's great to be strong but if you aren't flexible, you become very tight," she said. "If you are flexible without strength, you can get injured from loose joints."

Most runners don't stretch enough. "It usually takes getting injured, and then the physical therapist tells you you need to stretch," she said.

The workshop will focus on breath, body alignment, form, strength and flexibility. Several runners take Rosvold's Mixed Yoga class on Wednesday evenings at Sol Yoga, and she tries to educate them about the benefits of each pose.

"I talk about musculature," she said. "Runners tend to be more educated about that, or they have more body awareness."

Rosvold, 32, began running in high school, and after a few years off, returned to it nine years ago. She started taking yoga in 1998. "One of the things I noticed when I started was my alignment," she said. "I would notice if I was not sitting up tall." She realized that by opening up her body, rather than hunching, she could breathe better while running.

"Runners who do yoga with breath tend to have a higher VO2 max," she said. VO2 max measures a person's maximum oxygen intake.

Yoga is getting more attention from the scientific community, and studies are showing that yoga helps with low back pain, migraines and injuries caused by athletics, Rosvold said.

Rosvold has been studying the yoga techniques of Beryl Bender Birch, who for many years was the wellness director of the New York Road Runners Club. She pioneered power yoga, and specializes in working with athletes.

Rosvold said yoga taught her how to breathe, bringing oxygen into her entire body. "Have you ever noticed when you get tense, you stop breathing, or breathe into your chest?" she said.

When she races, yoga helps her breathe more deeply, especially as she's becoming fatigued. Yoga also helps remove stress and tension.

Runners benefit from balancing poses, "especially if you do trail running," she said. Warrior poses help runners focus on grounding through their feet, and open up the hips. "If there's one part of the body runners need to focus on it would be working the hips," she said. Warrior poses are also very good for cyclists, who also tend to have tight hip flexors. "You're lifting your legs, and then sitting at a desk or on your couch," she said. Yoga poses combine strength with flexibility. It also leaves participants feeling great after class. "You get that little yoga buzz afterwards," she said. Runners, and other athletes, may notice that some of the poses don't come easily. They should take care not to push themselves beyond their limit. "You want to push to the

edge but not hurt yourself,” she said. “We tend to push ourselves to run faster, farther. Sometimes it’s a little difficult to teach runners that it’s OK not to be able to touch your toes. It’s kind of human nature, but you want to make sure you listen to your body.”

She cautions runners to watch their knees. “It means paying attention to how it feels,” she said. “Pigeon is a great hip stretch, but if you feel twinging in your knees you have to back off. It’s going back to the idea of not overdoing it.”

Each yoga pose has an infinite number of variations. Runners tend to want to do the hardest versions of the pose they can, but the key is opening up the body’s tight muscles, not to make yoga into an athletic contest.

Even mountain pose, where participants stand on the floor, hands together, palm to palm, requires focus and lifting. “You’re lifting through the chest, opening up through the chest,” Rosvold said. “It’s helpful for people to imagine their spine becoming taller.”

Rosvold has completed eight marathons since 2000 and at least 10 ultra-marathons.

Ultramarathons start at a distance of 50 kilometers, or 31 miles, and go up to 100 miles and beyond. Rosvold completed one 100-miler in Wisconsin, with an excellent time of 26 and a half hours. She plans to run another in late summer.

This year she was the top Frederick County woman finisher at the JFK 50 Mile Run in Boonsboro in November, completing the distance in just under nine hours.

Rosvold took a 200-hour Yoga Alliance-approved course from YogaFit. Yoga Alliance is considered the gold standard of yoga teacher training.

“We try to encourage students to take the practice off the mat, and use it as a mantra when you’re frustrated with the kids or at work,” she said.---The workshop is Sunday, Feb. 19, from 2-3:30 p.m. The fee is \$15. Class size is limited to 18. Sol Yoga is located at 256 W. Patrick St., Unit 4. For more information or to register, call 301-620-0027, or 1-800-SOL-YOGA. Sol Yoga has a Web site, [www.solyoga.org](http://www.solyoga.org).