

International Conference on **Weight Loss and Fitness Expo** July 13-15, 2015 Philadelphia, USA

Hot yoga and obesity-related metabolic dysfunction

Stacy D Hunter
Pure Action, Inc. USA

Insulin resistance is associated with obesity and advancing age. Although much evidence supports a positive role of traditional exercise in improving metabolic function, only a few studies have employed yoga as an interventional strategy. Yoga may present a feasible alternative exercise for obese adults due to the low-impact nature and moderate-intensity of this activity. As indirect evidence has shown beneficial effects of stretching and thermal therapy on glucose metabolism, we investigated the effect of 8 weeks of hot yoga, a combination of thermal therapy and flexibility training on glucose tolerance in both lean and obese adults. Although no changes in anthropometric measures occurred in lean adults, body mass and body mass index significantly declined in obese subjects as a result of the hot yoga intervention. Glucose tolerance also improved in obese but not in lean adults. Bikram yoga may be an effective alternate therapy for the treatment of obesity-related metabolic dysfunction.

Biography

Stacy Hunter is the Research Director for Pure Action, Inc. a nonprofit organization devoted to funding yoga research and providing yoga to underserved populations. She is also an affiliate of the University of Texas at Austin where she received her PhD in Clinical Exercise Physiology studying the effects of yoga on vascular function in the Cardiovascular Aging Research Laboratory. She has published several studies on the impact of various styles of yoga on vascular function and glucose tolerance and traveled the US and abroad presenting her findings.

Stacy.d.hunter@gmail.com

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