

## Free Discussion

1

### Health and Wellness



Women engage in yoga recently at Watamoto Yoga Studio in the Kyobashi district in Chuo Ward, Tokyo.

Having gone in and out a fashion several times in the past, yoga is back in the spotlight again, put there this time by women in their 20s and 30s.

Numerous yoga fitness centers have been set up nationwide to meet new and **fickle** yoga lovers' eager demands.

This time, the newly **minted zealots** are pursuing made-in-the-U.S.A. workouts rather than traditional spiritual exercises.

The keywords are "hot" and "power," according to industry insiders.

"Hot yoga," in which people exercises in a steamy studio, is one of today's two major trends.

Adherents say stretching in a hot and humid room increases body flexibility without damaging muscles or joints.

Working out in a high-temperature room causes a flood of perspiration, which promotes **detoxification** as well as losing weight, they say.

"Those who don't usually sweat so much will eventually be soaking wet," said Mami Sakaba, an official of Venture Bank Inc., which

operates 18 yoga LAVA hot yoga studios in the Tokyo metropolitan area.

"Hot yoga heals body swelling and excessive sensitivity to cold."

But does it really work?

In a hot studio, warm, damp air **seeps out**, as though one is entering a tropical forest. It's no wonder, as the room temperature is kept at 38 degrees with 65 percent humidity.

Slowly and deeply **inhaling** air through their noses, participants in a lesson assume several yoga positions.

The sweat starts to come within less than 15 minutes, even though all they are doing is moving into new positions. A leaden and fatigued body feels much better and refreshed after sweating hard.

"I rarely sweat because I usually sit at a desk and do paper work," said a participant in her 30s who has been into yoga for three months. "My body feels lightened since I've started this yoga."

The other major trend is called "power yoga," which involves a workout. Its popularity was sparked by Hollywood actresses and models who adopted power yoga to maintain their slender bodies. In Japan, it is seen as a fashionable sport for losing weight.

Unlike the original mental-healing yoga, in which people assume postures by bending arms and legs while sitting, power yoga requires assuming positions while in a standing position. It strengthens muscles and is relatively easy for people who have a less flexible body.