

*Yoga, t'ai chi, Pilates. These three "soft" workouts can give you one hard body...that's streamlined, supple, toned. Once considered too out there, these workout alternatives are becoming more mainstream, moving into more health clubs in more cities. Once you've body-tested them, you may never go back to aerobics again. Stretch your mind—and your definition of fitness—*

*with this introduction to three new*

# workout inspirations

## yoga

### **A fountain of youth**

*Yoga postures reverse gravity and increase blood and lymph circulation in the face and neck. Regular practitioners develop longer, more supple muscles, a regal, erect posture and a springy walk.*

### **WANT TO QUIT SMOKING OR BECOME MORE CREATIVE?**

Yoga can help with both, and many other goals in between. "Cigarettes are a way of dealing with emotional issues," says yoga teacher Donna Davidge. Controlled yoga breathing and postures are a good—and healthier—replacement. Yoga meditation also quiets the mind, enhancing creativity and intuition.

### **THE POWER OF YOGA**

One of the first things you notice about yoga is its focus. Aerobic exercise scatters your energy; yoga harnesses it, says Alan Finger, a New York yogi master. "A 60-watt bulb will only light a room. But if you took the rays from that bulb and concentrated them, you'd have an intense, highly concentrated beam of light. Yoga teaches you how to harness your energy and apply it to your life."

### **An ancient discipline with modern relevance**

Yoga's emphasis is on proper breathing, alignment and controlled movements. What you get out of yoga is what you put into it. You can do the movements slowly—some resemble calisthenics; others, dance stretches—or move from posture to posture in a way that breaks a sweat. "When you do yoga, you begin to recognize how much momentum and how little muscle you use in aerobics," says Davidge, our transcendental model, *left*. In this way, yoga complements more conventional exercises and workouts.

Yoga doesn't require pretzel-like flexibility. At first, all you need for yoga is a receptive mind, says Davidge. The postures extend, contract and rotate each muscle, so that muscle tone—flexibility and strength—will develop.

### **Where you'll find it: Just about everywhere you are**

Yoga has become ubiquitous, the token "alternative" workout in health clubs and spas. Adult-education organizations, hospital outpatient programs and stress-management classes frequently offer yoga. And the yel-

low pages are chockablock with independent yoga centers, classes and teachers. If you're a beginner, don't get too caught up in a particular "school" (there are hundreds)—focus on finding a good, inspiring teacher.