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Excerpts from:

Doctor's Orders: 20 Minutes Of Meditation Twice a Day

Meditation increasingly is being worked into hospital rehabilitation programs as studies show it can lower blood pressure and help patients with chronic illness cope with pain and depression.

....In a study published last year in the American Heart Association journal *Circulation: Cardiovascular Quality and Outcomes*, African-Americans with heart disease who practiced Transcendental Meditation regularly were 48% less likely to have a heart attack or stroke, or to die, than those who attended a health-education class. Among the meditation group, there were 20 such occurrences, compared with 32 in the control group. The study, which ran for more than five years, involved about 200 people.

Recent research found that meditation can result in molecular changes affecting the length of telomeres, a protective covering at the end of chromosomes that gets shorter as people age. The study involved 40 family caregivers of dementia patients. Half of the participants meditated briefly on a daily basis and the other half listened to relaxing music for 12 minutes a day. The eight-week study found that people who meditated showed a 43% improvement in telomerase activity, an enzyme that regulates telomere length, compared with a 3.7% gain in the group listening to music. The participants meditating also showed improved mental and cognitive functioning and lower levels of depression compared with the control group. The pilot study was published in January in the *International Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry*.

Government-funded research also is exploring meditation's effect on dieting and depression.