

Prevention

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Meditate Your Way to a Healthy Heart

TM twice a day improves cardio-vascular health

Q: I'd like to improve my heart health and reduce my risk of heart attack naturally, without drugs. Can yoga and meditation help?

It's true--according to a recent study, murmuring your mantra regularly might cut your risk of heart attack and stroke. In fact, study participants who practiced a special form of meditation improved cardiovascular health.

Researchers from the University of California, Los Angeles department of psychology, Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science in Los Angeles, and the Maharishi University of Management College of Maharishi Vedic Medicine in Fairfield, IA, randomly split 60 African-American people with high blood pressure into two groups. One learned Transcendental Meditation (TM) and practiced it for 20 minutes, twice a day. The other received standard heart disease prevention education.

Seven months later, researchers used ultrasound to measure fatty deposits and the thickness of the participants' artery walls. The TM group had a decrease in artery wall thickness, which could reduce heart attack risk by up to 11 percent and stroke risk by up to 15 percent. Artery wall thickness increased in the education group (Stroke, 2000).

There's "very strong evidence from this and other studies that meditation has health-promoting effects," says Prevention advisor John Astin, PhD, assistant professor at the University of Maryland School of Medicine in Baltimore. And benefits could extend to all ethnic groups.

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