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**Vital Signs**

## **Regimens: High Blood Pressure? Meditation May Help**

By Nicholas Bakalar

Transcendental Meditation improves blood pressure and insulin resistance in heart patients, according to a placebo-controlled study carried out at an academic medical center in California.

Researchers studied 84 patients with coronary artery disease, randomly dividing them into two groups. The first received a 16-week course of health education; the second was enrolled in a course in Transcendental Meditation. Both groups continued to receive conventional medical care and advice.

Transcendental Meditation is a technique that involves mental concentration and physical relaxation through the use of a mantra, a repeated phrase or syllable.

By the end of the study, the participants in the meditation group had significantly lower blood pressure compared with participants in the control group. They also had significantly improved in measures of insulin resistance, the ability of the body to properly process insulin and blood sugar. The paper appeared yesterday in Archives of Internal Medicine.

The scientists suggest that transcendental meditation causes improvements in certain elements of the metabolic syndrome, the group of related symptoms that increase the risk of coronary heart disease and other cardiovascular problems.

“The good thing about meditation is that it has a very nice quality-of-life component,” said the senior author of the study, Dr. C. Noel Bairey Merz, professor of medicine at the University of California, at Los Angeles. “There's no ongoing financial cost, no side effects and a lot of data to demonstrate that it has a beneficial effect.”

It is, she added, “yet another therapeutic modality that can be added to regular care.”

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