



Health

Meditate, and Feel Blood Pressure Fall

FRIDAY, March 4, 2005 -- Transcendental Meditation (TM) may help blood vessels relax as it relaxes the mind, reducing heart disease risks along the way.

That's the main finding of an eight-month study involving 111 black teens on the threshold of becoming hypertensive adults.

Researchers report that just two 15-minute TM sessions per day were enough to trigger an average 21 percent increase in the ability of the teens' blood vessels to dilate.

In contrast, black teens who did not meditate experienced an average 4 percent *decrease* in blood vessel dilation over the study period.

"Our blood vessels are not rigid pipes. They need to dilate and constrict, according the needs of the body," lead investigator Dr. Vernon A. Barnes, a physiologist at the Medical College of Georgia's Georgia Prevention Institute, said in a prepared statement.

"If this improvement in the ability to dilate can be replicated in other at-risk groups and cardiovascular disease patients, this could have important implications for inclusion of meditation programs to prevent and treat cardiovascular diseases and its clinical consequences," Barnes said. "We know this type of change is achievable with lipid-lowering drugs, but it's remarkable that a meditation program can produce such as change."

The findings appear in the April issue of the *American Journal of Hypertension* and are being presented at the American Psychosomatic Society annual meeting in Vancouver, which runs from March 2-5. Similar, positive findings collected at the four-month point of the study were presented by researchers in the same journal last spring.

"Change can't be expected overnight," Barnes stressed. "Meditation and other positive lifestyle habits such as exercising and eating right have to become part of your life, like brushing your teeth."

He added that longer studies are necessary to assess the long-term impact of meditation on heart disease risk.

More information

The U.S. National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine has more about mind-body medicine.