

Studies Show Meditation Improves Memory and Promotes Longevity

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Practiced by millions of individuals to reduce stress and anxiety, improve concentration, and even lower blood pressure, meditation is the most commonly used alternative health practice. New evidence published in the *American Journal of Cardiology*, suggests that meditation not only lowers blood pressure, it may actually lengthen your life. In addition, studies on meditation have confirmed for the first time that daily practice of meditation can improve cognitive function.

Researchers from the University of Pennsylvania began their investigation by conducting neurological and memory tests on a group of older adults with a history of memory complaints. Brain imaging techniques which measure cerebral blood flow were conducted on each subject. Following the tests, subjects were instructed to practice a 10-minute meditation each day for eight weeks.

Follow up testing confirmed statistically significant improvements in memory among all of the study's subjects and follow up scans showed dramatic increases in blood flow to the region of the brain associated with learning and memory. It is the first region of the brain to decline in individuals diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. Dr. Khalsa, medical director of the Alzheimer's Research and Prevention Foundation, the organization which sponsored the study said, "While we are planning additional research in this area, we can say today with confidence that daily meditation is recommended as part of an integrated brain longevity strategy to delay, even prevent, cognitive decline."

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A review of two studies published in the *American Journal of Cardiology*, investigating the effects of meditation on blood pressure, showed that men and women who practiced meditation had lower blood pressures than those who did not. Some were assigned to a meditation group while others were divided into groups that practiced other relaxation techniques. The participants were followed for an average of eight years. The study also found that those meditating were more likely to live longer as participants who practiced meditation were less likely to die from cardiovascular disease and less likely to die from cancer.

These studies show a simple meditation practice helps memory and contributes to an overall healthy lifestyle. To integrate meditation into your life, try this meditation practice five minutes each day:



Meditation Practice: Before you begin, do some essential preparation -- sit with your back fairly straight, relax each area of your body as much as you can. Once you feel settled, begin to focus your attention on the sensations of your breath. Become absorbed in the sensations of the breath flowing in and out of your body. Notice how the sensations change. Keep following the sensation of the breath for at least five minutes. If your mind wanders, just come back to experiencing the physical sensations of the breath. Bring as much patience into the process as possible. After five minutes or so, take a deep breath, stretch a little and continue your day with a fresh mind set, feeling more peaceful and relaxed.