

Heart health through meditation

Research about the mind-calming practice of meditation published over the past two decades found that meditation may improve a host of factors linked with heart disease.

Meditation uses breathing and your focus on a sound or image to help release stress. When you feel stress, you release adrenaline that makes your breathing speed up and your heart rate and blood pressure rise. Meditation helps you slow your breathing, which positively affects your heart and body. In fact, the American Heart Association analyzed nine different studies and found meditation lowered both systolic and diastolic blood pressure. And according to studies conducted by the Tulane School of Medicine, regular meditation, along with lifestyle choices, may lower cholesterol and cortisol levels.

In addition, meditation has a positive effect on your heart rate variability, which is how quickly your heart makes changes between each beat. A high HRV rate is a sign of a healthier heart. One study found that people who practiced five minutes of meditation daily for 10 days had a better HRV than those who didn't meditate.



While meditation may help you manage stress and positively affect some risk factors for heart disease, it shouldn't replace things, such as eating healthy, managing your weight and getting regular exercise. And it shouldn't be a substitute for medication or other treatments your doctor has prescribed.

There are many different kinds of meditation to choose from, including:

- Loving-kindness (compassion)
- Vipassana (insight)
- Mindfulness based
- Relaxation
- Transcendental
- Zen
- Moving

Try different types of meditation to find what works for you, and make it a regular part of your healthy lifestyle.

Sources: [health.harvard.edu](https://www.health.harvard.edu)*, [ahajournals.org](https://www.ahajournals.org)*, [heart.org](https://www.heart.org)*

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