

February 2005

## Science and Your Health

A guide to some of the newest research and recommendations

### Meditation and Medication

Stress-reduction techniques such as meditation may help reduce high blood pressure and the need for treatment, according to a study published in the American Journal of Hypertension last week. Researchers evaluated 150 African-American men and women with stage I hypertension (average blood pressure 142/95, with 140/90 considered normal by many doctors). Blacks have higher rates of high blood pressure than other groups.

The one-year study found that patients who practiced Transcendental Meditation lowered their diastolic pressure by 6mm and systolic pressure by 3mm, while patients who tried muscle-relaxation therapy or took conventional health education classes saw their diastolic pressure drop by only 3mm, with no change in systolic pressure. The meditators also had a 23 percent reduction in their use of hypertension medication by the conclusion of the study. Transcendental meditation involves 15 to 20 minutes of body relaxation conducted with the eyes closed. The study was funded by the National Institutes of Health.

**Tip:** About 29 percent of the U.S. population has hypertension, though many sufferers are unaware of their condition. Doctors recommend that healthy persons have their blood pressure tested at least once every two years. Under the advice of a physician, patients who have high blood pressure may consider diet changes, exercise, medication and/or alternative therapies such as meditation.