

The Washington Post

HEALTH

Monday, May 2, 2005

Transcendental Meditation

Stress-reducing relaxation may improve life expectancy

THE QUESTION Research has shown that mental relaxation techniques such as Transcendental Meditation (TM) can reduce stress and help lower blood pressure. Might this allow people to live longer?

THIS STUDY followed 202 people (average age 72) for up to 18 years after they participated in two studies that had randomly assigned them to practice TM or other relaxation methods intended to reduce stress and lower their high blood pressure. In each study, an additional group was given standard health education information. The TM group recorded about 30 percent fewer deaths from cardiovascular disease and 23 percent fewer deaths overall than did the health education group. People who practiced TM fared somewhat better than those in the other relaxation groups.

WHO MAY BE AFFECTED BY THESE FINDINGS? People with high blood pressure.

CAVEATS The study was not randomized, but rather was an analysis of additional data collected on participants in earlier randomized studies.

BOTTOM LINE People with hypertension may want to ask a doctor about meditation techniques such as TM.

FIND THIS STUDY May 1 issue of the American Journal of Cardiology.