

Topic of the Week

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WE CARE ABOUT YOUR HEALTH

Meditation for Pain Relief

Presented by: Mark J. Glesener, DC

Pain is one of the most common health afflictions in the world. In North America alone, over 50 million people suffer from non-malignant chronic pain. One percent of the population is chronically disabled by low back pain – the primary cause of disability for people under the age of 45. And the cost is massive. Medical care for pain adds up to \$106 billion a year.¹

Fortunately, pain research and education have opened a variety of options for pain sufferers, including chiropractic. People can find relief beyond invasive surgery or dependence on pain-killing drugs. In fact, some recent research reveals the pain relief benefits of a very old holistic practice: meditation.



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Meditation - From Religion to Science

Meditative techniques have developed over the centuries from a wide variety of cultures around the world. Some of the oldest evidence of meditation comes from artifacts of the Indus Valley Civilization, which existed in parts of India and Pakistan around 3,500 BC. Later, the influence of meditation spread throughout India and into Southeast Asia with the development of Hinduism and Buddhism.

Today, millions of people all over the globe use meditation to relieve stress, improve concentration and seek spiritual enlightenment. But scientists studying the effects of meditation show it can be a potent force for pain relief.

Changing the Focus and Perception of Pain

Meditation helps focus your mind away from pain, but it may also assist your brain to reinterpret pain signals. For example, with consistent practice, you may be able to teach your brain to change the feeling of burning pain into a warm, comforting sensation. Meditation also gives you a feeling of control over your mind and body.

Exercise of the Week Side Crunches with Exercise Ball in a Supine Position

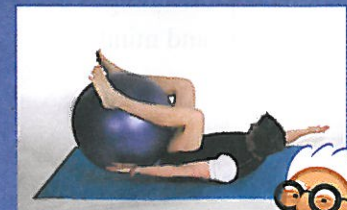
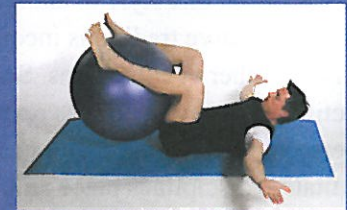
(Consult your chiropractor before engaging in this or any other exercise.)

Difficulty: Moderate to advanced

Start: Lie on back with arms to side, palms up. Position ball behind legs so it can be lifted off floor with hamstrings/adductors.

Exercise: Lift ball just off floor. Pull stomach inward while inhaling and lift head and shoulders. As you exhale, tilt sideways, reaching for ball. Keep arms parallel to floor at all times. Return to starting position, then switch sides.

Repeat 10-15 times.



For those who suffer chronic pain, they often turn to meditation to reduce not only physical pain but to help reduce reliance on pain medications, which can have serious side effects. Meditation also reduces the stress, irritability, anxiety and depression that long term pain sufferers often endure.

Several studies have been conducted on the effectiveness of meditation in dealing with chronic pain.

Medical meditation pioneer Jon Kabat-Zinn conducted a study of chronic pain sufferers who consistently practiced meditation for ten weeks. Kabat-Zinn discovered that statistically significant reductions were observed in present-moment pain, inhibition of activity by pain, and mood disturbance.²

Researchers at Duke University conducted an eight-week pilot study of low back pain sufferers who practiced a Buddhist meditation technique. Researchers commented, "Preliminary results suggest that the loving-kindness (meditation style) program can be beneficial in reducing pain, anger and psychological distress in patients with persistent low back pain."³

Getting Started with Meditation

The techniques used in meditation can vary from one style to another. Some meditative traditions incorporate chants or other vocalizations. Some practitioners keep their eyes open, others keep them closed. But nearly all meditative disciplines place an importance on deep breathing. This helps relax the body and mind.

If you're a meditation beginner, set aside 15 minutes twice a day to meditate. Morning and evening often work best. Choose a place where you won't be disturbed. You may want to stretch first to help relax your muscles.

After settling into a comfortable position, breathe deeply. To help keep your concentration, you may want to gently focus your eyes on an object, such as a lit candle. When you first start meditating, you often encounter intruding thoughts. Accept this as part of the process. Allow these thoughts to float away; return your focus to the object. (You may want to purchase a meditation CD to help guide you through your sessions.)

Meditation and Chiropractic

Sitting postures for meditation may aggravate musculoskeletal problems, especially if you suffer from low back pain. Discuss with your chiropractor which body position you should use when meditating.

Meditation can be an excellent complementary practice for a holistic approach to health like chiropractic. But don't stop implementing other recommendations that your chiropractor has made to help relieve pain and heal your body. If you would like to discover more about meditation, see the "Meditation Books" section in the page 2 sidebar of this issue.



Quote of the Week

"Think of all the beauty that's still left and around you and be happy."

- Anne Frank

Meditation Books

(For general information only. Resources listed are not an endorsement by your chiropractor.)

The Mindfulness Solution to Pain: Step-by-Step Techniques for Chronic Pain Management
by Jackie Gardner-Nix

Wherever You Go, There You Are
by Jon Kabat-Zinn

Mindfulness for Beginners
(Audiobook)
by Jon Kabat-Zinn

For more health tips, visit online
www.citruspie.com



References and Sources:

- 1) Media backgrounder - *American Pain Society*; painexplained.ca - *Canadian Pain Society & Canadian Pain Coalition*.
- 2) The clinical use of mindfulness meditation for the self-regulation of chronic pain - *J Behav Med.* 1985 Jun;8(2):163-90.
- 3) Loving-Kindness meditation for chronic low back pain - *Journal of Holistic Nursing, Vol. 23, No. 3, 287-304 (2005)*

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