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Meditation May Lower BP and College Stressors

By Joene Hendry, Reuters

NEW YORK (Reuters Health) - If the stresses of college have put you at risk for high blood pressure, try Transcendental Meditation.

Blood pressure fell among college students who spent about 20 minutes at least once a day to reach the “restful alertness” state of Transcendental Meditation, Dr. Sanford I. Nidich, at Maharishi University of Management Research Institute in Maharishi Vedic City, Iowa, and colleagues report.

Their study, in the *American Journal of Hypertension*, found meditating students also had “reduced psychological distress, anxiety, and depression,” Nidich told Reuters Health in an email.

He and colleagues randomly assigned 298 healthy students with and without high blood pressure to Transcendental Meditation training or to a training wait list. The students, 40 percent men, were just under 26 years old on average and attended universities in and around Washington, D.C.

Among the 207 students still participating in the study 3 months later, those in the meditation group had slight reductions in blood pressure, while the wait-listed students had slight increases in average blood pressure from the start of the study.

The meditating students also showed greater reductions in overall mood disturbances, anxiety, depression, anger, and hostility, and better coping skills compared with baseline measures and wait-listed students.

Nidich’s team further assessed a subgroup of 48 meditating and 64 wait-listed students who initially had high blood pressure (above 130 over 85 millimeters of mercury) or were at risk for high blood pressure.

In this high-blood-pressure-risk group, the meditating students had blood pressures that were lower, on average, than at the start of the study, while the wait-listed students had increases in blood pressure.

Nidich and colleagues also found these “significant reductions” in blood pressure correlated with lower measures of psychological distress and greater coping measures.

The researchers suggest their findings warrant further investigations into the potential health benefits of longer-term Transcendental Meditation in college students.

SOURCE: *American Journal of Hypertension*, December 2009