

Yoga may help ease high blood pressure, study finds

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Numbers were lowered when people engaged in a few sessions per week.

(HealthDay)—People who follow the ancient practice of yoga may be getting an added health boost, with a new study suggesting it can fight high blood pressure—also known as hypertension.

"This study confirms many people's feelings that exercise may be useful in the control of [hypertension](#)," said Dr. Howard Weintraub, a cardiologist and associate professor of medicine at NYU Langone Medical Center in New York City. Weintraub was not connected to the new study.

Based on the new findings, "[yoga](#) would be a useful adjunct in the lowering of blood pressure in certain populations," he said.

In the study, researchers led by Dr. Debbie Cohen of the University of Pennsylvania tracked 58 women and men, aged 38 to 62, for six months.

Although the study couldn't prove a cause-and-effect relationship, doing yoga two to three times a week was associated with an average drop in [blood pressure readings](#) from 133/80 to 130/77, the researchers said.

In comparison, the average decrease in blood pressure was smaller (134/83 to 132/82) among people who ate a special diet but did not do yoga.

In a bit of a surprise, doing yoga in tandem with a special diet did not outperform doing yoga alone—blood pressure numbers fell only slightly (135/83 to 134/81) among people who ate a special diet and also did yoga, the researchers said.

The small decline in blood pressure among people who ate a special diet and did yoga may be because doing both required a greater amount of time, making it more difficult for participants to stick with their regimens, the authors said.

Weintraub said the study shows that "yoga can have a favorable effect" on hypertension. Although the amount of change was small, he said, "some large population studies have suggested that changes of this magnitude could have very significant long-term benefits."

The study did have some limitations, including its relatively short length and the fact that most participants were young and had milder forms of [high blood pressure](#), Weintraub said.

Another expert agreed that the ancient Indian practice of yoga might ease hypertension.

"Yoga, along with deep breathing exercises, meditation and inner reflection, is a good adjunctive and integrative cardiovascular approach to better health, including lowering [blood pressure](#), as this data suggests," said Dr. David Friedman, chief of Heart Failure Services at the North Shore-LIJ Plainview Hospital, in Plainview, N.Y.

"In addition to proper diet and aerobic physical fitness most days of the week, I recommend that my patients take time each day for the above measures of finding disciplined inner peace, for improved health and well-being," he said.

The findings were presented Wednesday at the annual scientific meeting of the American Society of Hypertension, in San Francisco. Findings presented at medical meetings typically are considered preliminary until published in a peer-reviewed journal.

More information: The American Academy of Family Physicians has more about [high blood pressure](#).

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