

Nagging low back pain? Try mindfulness

December 10 2018, by Len Canter, Healthday Reporter



(HealthDay)—Almost no one is immune to occasional low back pain. But when it's chronic, when simple movement seems impossible, it can keep you from enjoying life. And painkillers aren't always the answer.

Why not try meditation rather than medication?

Research has shown that mind-body practices can help. These include yoga and cognitive behavioral therapy, or CBT, which teaches you how to change certain thoughts and behaviors, which are factors involved in sensing pain.

A study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* adds mindfulness-based [stress](#) reduction—MBSR for short—to the list. It's based on principles of meditation designed to make you more aware and accepting of life's experiences. This translates to easing both physical and emotional discomfort.

For the study, researchers wanted to compare the results of [cognitive behavioral therapy](#) and mindfulness-based stress reduction on two different groups of participants. The people in both groups received eight weekly 2-hour sessions of their respective therapies and were then monitored for a year. At 26 weeks, about 60 percent of both the CBT and MBSR groups reported meaningful improvement in back pain and functioning. These results were still felt at the one-year mark, showing that mindfulness works as well as CBT. The advantage is that mindfulness-based stress reduction may be more readily available.

Developed at the University of Massachusetts in 1979, [mindfulness](#)-based [stress reduction](#) is now offered at more than 200 [medical facilities](#) around the world, at wellness retreats and, thanks to the internet, through online programs. Just make sure to check the credentials of the organizations and the practitioners offering the training before you sign up.

More information: The Center for Mindfulness at the University of Massachusetts Medical School has detailed information on [mindfulness training](#) for many different health and wellness goals.

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Citation: Nagging low back pain? Try mindfulness (2018, December 10) retrieved 28 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2018-12-nagging-pain-mindfulness.html>

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