

Mindfulness may reduce opioid cravings, study finds

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People suffering from opioid addiction and chronic pain may have fewer cravings and less pain if they use both mindfulness techniques and medication for opioid dependence, according to Rutgers and other

researchers.

The study, published in the journal *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, examined the effects of mindfulness and [methadone therapy](#) on 30 patients with [opioid addiction](#) and [chronic pain](#). Mindfulness is the meditative practice of focusing on the present moment and accepting one's thoughts, feelings and bodily sensations, without judgment.

The findings showed that those who received methadone and a mindfulness training-based intervention were 1.3 times better at controlling their cravings and had significantly greater improvements in pain, stress, and positive emotions, even though they were aware of more cravings than those who only received standard methadone treatment and counseling.

"Methadone maintenance therapy (MMT) has been an effective form of medication treatment for [opioid use disorder](#)," said Associate Professor Nina Cooperman, a clinical psychologist in the Division of Addiction Psychiatry at Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. "However, nearly half of individuals on MMT continue to use opioids during treatment or relapse with six months."

Cooperman said many of those with opioid addictions experience chronic pain, anxiety and depression while on methadone maintenance, which is why mindfulness-based, non-drug interventions are promising treatments.

The researchers said mindfulness-based interventions could help people dependent on opioids increase their self-awareness and self-control over cravings and be less reactive to emotional and physical pain. Individuals with an opioid addiction could also be taught to change their negative thoughts and savor pleasant events, which may help them to regulate their emotions and experience more enjoyment.

More information: Eric L. Garland et al. Mindfulness-Oriented Recovery Enhancement reduces opioid craving among individuals with opioid use disorder and chronic pain in medication assisted treatment: Ecological momentary assessments from a stage 1 randomized controlled trial, *Drug and Alcohol Dependence* (2019). [DOI: 10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2019.07.007](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2019.07.007)

Provided by Rutgers University

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