

Meditation found to reduce stress and anxiety in patients with heart disease

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Four months of meditation practice improves quality of life in patients

with coronary artery disease, according to [research presented](#) at ESC Preventive Cardiology 2023, a scientific congress of the European Society of Cardiology (ESC).

"It is common to feel low and anxious after being diagnosed with a heart condition," said study author Ms. Ana Luisa Vitorino Monteiro, a meditation teacher and scientific researcher at the University of Lisbon, Portugal. "Our study suggests that meditation could be a useful addition to standard exercise rehabilitation."

It is well established that [stress](#), anxiety and depression are linked with the development and progression of heart disease. The onset of cardiovascular disease is associated with a more than two-fold increased risk of mental health conditions. At least one in five [heart patients](#) carries a diagnosis of a mental disorder. It is also recognized that heart patients with [mental health problems](#) need extra support to adhere to lifestyle changes and drug treatment.

This study examined the effect of meditation on stress, anxiety, depression and [quality of life](#) in patients with [coronary artery disease](#). The study included 40 patients with coronary artery disease who had attended an exercise-based cardiovascular rehabilitation program for at least six months. The average age of participants was 65 years and 20% were women. Participants were randomly allocated to four months of meditation practice on top of usual care, or usual care alone. Usual care was continuing with the exercise program.

The study used karuna meditation which focuses on breathing and compassionate thoughts. The meditation group had a weekly 90-minute session for one month. During the next three months, participants were asked to meditate for 20 minutes a day on their own or using a recording from the investigators, and they received a weekly phone call to ask questions. Stress, anxiety, depression and quality of life were assessed at

baseline and after four months using the Perceived Stress Scale, Beck Anxiety Inventory, Beck Depression Inventory and HeartQoL questionnaire, respectively.

Between baseline and the end of the study, average [depression](#), stress and [anxiety](#) scores reduced in the meditation group by 44%, 31% and 29%, respectively. The corresponding reductions in the usual care group were 3%, 3% and 3%. Over the same time period, average scores on the emotional dimension of quality of life increased by 60% in the meditation group but reduced by 2% in the usual care group.

Ms. Vitorino Monteiro said, "Meditation is easy to do, can be done almost anywhere and does not require any equipment. Our study shows that meditation can improve psychological symptoms and quality of life in patients with [heart disease](#), which we hope could also be the start of making healthier lifestyle choices."

More information: Meditation as a stress management strategy in cardiac rehabilitation for coronary artery disease patients: a randomized controlled trial, ESC Preventive Cardiology 2023

Provided by European Society of Cardiology

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