

Meditation & Healthy Living

Hồng Quang

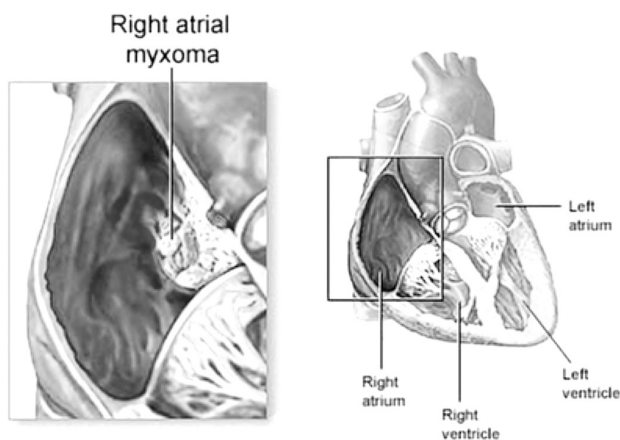
Everyone wants to be healthy or have as few illnesses as possible. As a result, millions of doctors and nurses have been trained, thousands of hospitals have been built, and medications have been manufactured to look after patients and to cure illnesses. However, physical and mental suffering is the fact of life as the Buddha taught in the Four Noble Truths. Although modern healthcare is available, it is often too costly and the prescribed medication may not be able to cure all medical conditions and cause certain side effects. In contrast, Eastern medicine has provided miraculous treatments that are effective yet costless for more than two thousand years. Within Eastern medicine, meditation has been known and practiced but few know about its true medicinal effectiveness. That miraculous medication is **meditation**.



For the last 50 years, hospitals and medical doctors in the West have used meditation to treat not only mental illnesses but other physical conditions as well.

There are evidences that meditation can cure or at least can reduce symptoms of diseases such as the ten basic illnesses. The effectiveness has been confirmed by experimental data from a number of hospitals and medical doctors around the world.

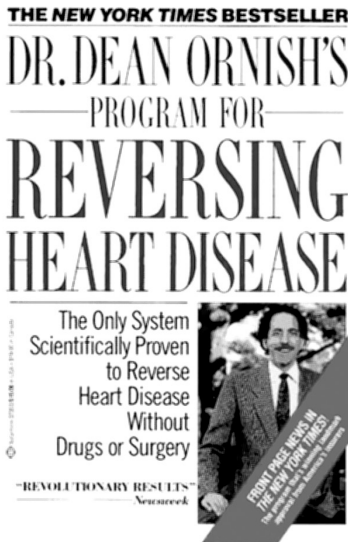
1. HEART DISEASE



ADAM.

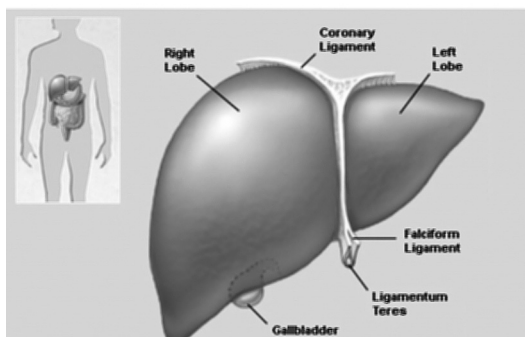
The main cause of heart disease is a person's eating habits. Eating foods containing too much fat, oil, salt as well as consuming too much meat products and not enough fruits and vegetables can cause the disease. Anxiety and feelings of anger have also contributed to the cause of a variety of diseases. Diet and mental stress are the two main causes for many illnesses, particularly heart diseases. Dr. Dean Ornish, who has written many books, introduces the treatments for heart diseases in *Dr. Dean Ornish's Program for Reversing Heart Disease*.

An article in the *Los Angeles Times* that was written ten years ago recounts that, instead of using surgery in heart disease cases, Dr. Dean Ornish only applied three treatments for severe heart disease patients: *vegetarianism, physical exercises, and meditation*. The rate of success



was 85%. The big health insurance companies such as Blue Cross, Blue Shield, and Mutual of Omaha gave financial incentives of \$3,500.00 USD to each patient who accepted this treatment program.

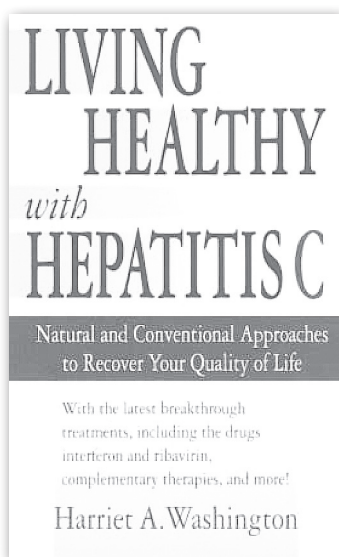
Dr. Herbert Benson and his colleagues, who worked in the labs and lectured at the Harvard University medical school (USA), generally encouraged their patients to apply relaxation as a treatment for heart diseases. The book entitled, *The Relaxation Response*, stated that if a person practices meditation for 10 to 20 minutes twice a day, it may cure heart diseases, high blood pressure, chronic pain, loss of sleep, and other mental and physical illnesses. These illnesses may have been caused by stress which in turn is caused by the human desire for wealth, power and possessiveness.



2. HEPATITIS

Three different types of viruses cause Hepatitis A, B and C. Type A is not really dangerous, but the other two are harmful. One of the causes of Hepatitis discovered by scientists is also stress. When one is too mentally and physically stressed, the liver reacts by producing an antibody that weakens the immune system which gradually leads to liver inflammation.

An article in the web will tell why Meditation could help Hepatitis C:



“Why Meditation May Help Hepatitis C

October 27, 2008

Evidence indicates that incorporating meditation into your daily routine could prevent a Hepatitis C flare up. This article tells you how it works and what you can do.

By Nicole Cutler, L.Ac.

Most who have emerged from the invincible self-perception of the teen years know that their body is more vulnerable to illness when under stress. Whether evaluating the common cold or cancer, medical researchers have repeatedly confirmed this association. For those managing chronic Hepatitis C, the connection between health and stress takes on monumental significance. There are various ways one can reduce or relieve stress. However, meditation’s ability to prevent liver disease from flaring up makes it a top stress-relieving choice for many with chronic Hepatitis C.

Understanding Stress

Because it is a subjective sensation that differs with each person, stress is difficult to define. Caused by both positive and negative experiences, stress is the body’s way of responding to any kind of demand. When feeling stressed, the body reacts by releasing chemicals into the bloodstream to

enhance energy and strength. Designed to prepare for “fight or flight,” the initial result of this chemical release is:

- Faster breathing
- Quickened heart rate
- Muscle tension

The physiological response described above is intended to boost people’s abilities when in physical danger. However, people often have no outlet for the extra energy and strength that was initiated by emotional stressors. Therefore, a person’s first line of defense against emotional stress is convincing the body to relax again. By quieting the mind and purposefully slowing down the breathing rate, meditation helps many people vent the tension in their body and subsequently achieve relaxation.

Meditation for Stress Relief

Eastern medical traditions and philosophies have recognized the health benefits of meditation for thousands of years. Due to its positive effects on relieving stress and consequently improving health, meditation is now widely practiced in the many parts of the Western world.

*Meditation can be used for stress relief or as part of a spiritual practice. Either way, meditation is a tool to help quiet the mind while promoting awareness and a sense of well-being. Sometimes described as the practice of mindfulness or living in the present, there are many types of meditation a person can experiment with. Meditation can be self-taught or learned from a teacher, book or **recording**. While it may be simple to learn, regular meditation requires a commitment to its practice. Advocates claim that when part of a daily routine, meditation enforces health by relieving stress and tension.*

Meditation for Hepatitis C

People with chronic viral hepatitis typically experience a flare-up of symptoms following a bout of stress. Various types of research have confirmed the connection between stress and its implication on liver inflammation. Some of the conclusions and physiological reasons supporting meditation for chronic Hepatitis C include:

- *Research on hypnotically induced fear and anxiety resulted in a significantly decreased flow of blood through the liver.*
- *Those with Hepatitis C who were categorized as having a consistently stressed and uptight personality (type 1) were more likely to be associated with severe liver disease than those who had a more relaxed, easy-going personality.*
- *During stress, natural killer cells multiply in the liver. Natural killer cells can contribute to liver cell death and the worsening of liver disease.*
- *By monitoring the part of the brain that controls the liver, researchers observed that stress impairs blood flow and may lead to, or trigger, liver damage.*
- *During periods of stress, the body releases glucocorticoids, which maintain balance in the function of each organ. Mice pre-treated with glucocorticoids were found to have deterioration in their liver function.*
- *Therapies targeting stress reduction such as hypnosis, acupuncture and meditation can stimulate the vagus nerve, which counters the negative effects of stress on the liver.*

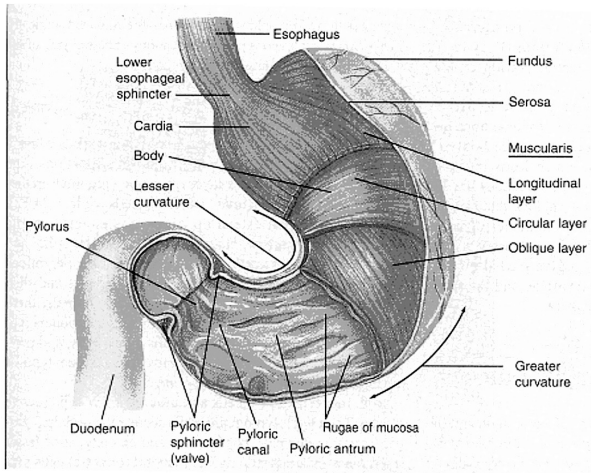
All of the interactions between stress and the liver are not completely understood. However, there is an undeniable relationship between unrelieved stress and liver disease progression. While meditation does not offer a cure for Hepatitis C, its ability to relieve stress can reduce the virus’ opportunistic approach for causing liver damage’.

3. STOMACH ACHE & INDIGESTION:

There are many types of stomach illnesses like stomach ulcer, high stomach acid and indigestion. One of the traditional or alternative treatments is taking "black tumeric powder". Western medication used includes Tums, Antacid or some kind of calcium supplement. However, many medical doctors have applied meditation to treat indigestion as stated in the following information.

“Meditation to Help Digestion

Practicing meditation to help digestion by alleviating anxiety and stress is bringing benefits to people worldwide. Techniques for meditation to help digestion are being given serious consideration



Source: http://www.hepatitis-central.com/mt/archives/2008/10/why_meditation.html

by many medical professionals globally due to thousands reporting successful results.

The subconscious mind controls the body's automatic responses: Blinking, swallowing, peristalses, breathing and digestion are some of these bodily functions. Accessing the depths of the subconscious mind to activate your body's natural ability to repair and realign itself can only be done through deep hypnosis or meditation. To help digestion, you would be best to either visit a qualified (pricey!) and reputable hypnotherapist, or use a guided meditation specifically designed for healing. When your conscious thought processes step aside and your body relaxes, the suggestions and affirmations used will have greater influence on the part of the mind that controls the body.

A common reason many people experience problems with digestion is because of anxiety and stress. Whether you get an upset stomach when you're nervous or worried, or if you choose to eat and drink things that are bad for you under duress, stress directly and indirectly affects digestive processes. By using a daily meditation to help digestion you will achieve deep rumination, releasing stress and relaxing muscles surrounding your digestive organs.

Visualization and imagery is an important and effective ingredient

for meditation to help digestion. Using your imagination, you can picture food following the digestive path with ease, and with great deliberation you can activate each organ through attention energy and the power of the subconscious mind. You can use mental pictures and the power of thought to send white and golden healing light to your organs, which will also encourage your body to give itself a kick start. Absorption is such an important factor to the whole digestive process, so any good meditation to help digestion should include imagery relating to food assimilation as well.

Rushing in and buying the first meditation or hypnosis for healing you come across is probably not the best idea. Spend some time testing samples and give contemplation to how the sound of the voice makes you feel, do you like the background music and sounds, and does it cover all areas of the digestive processes? When you find one that is right for you, you will know, and you can always use a few different ones if you prefer too.

Other issues facing those with digestive problems that are certainly worth reflection are the types of food you choose to eat and how you eat it. Using meditation to help digestion will also give you the power to get control over your eating habits and begin to choose healthier options. You will be able to remind yourself to slow down while you consume food, chew properly and pause between mouthfuls, which are all very important for healthy food digestion.

On another level all together you can also include eating meditation as part of your solution. Sit in a quiet and comfortable position, and much like walking meditation, focus on every fine detail of eating: This can include the way you sit, how you hold utensils, lifting your arm and hand to your mouth, chewing and moving the food around your mouth, swallowing, then sitting in silence and visualizing the food traveling perfectly through to your stomach. For those who have a problem with heart burn or acid reflux, include imagery of the lid closing to your stomach, or the sphincter at the base of the esophagus closing tight and opening only to let food pass through. Repeat the process for the entire meal for every mouthful you eat or drink, and when your digestive problems repair themselves you

can let go of the details but continue to eat consciously.

Your body wants to work flawlessly, and the absorption and digestion of food is paramount to your physical and mental health. Using meditation to help digestion will result in less stress and calmer, more harmonious bodily functions. If you have ever thought your digestive system could work more effectively, find a good guided audio meditation that suits your needs, or alternatively write your own and record it for replay”.

By Joyce Bingham

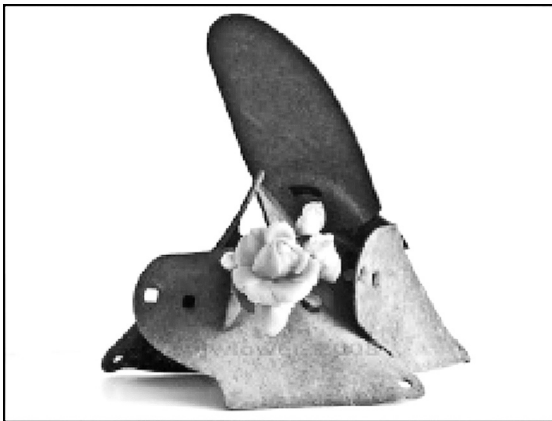
Source: www.project-meditation.org/.../meditation_to_help_digestion.html -

These are many articles on meditation for further study.

- a) Meditation for alleviating anxieties
- b) Meditation for a healthy life
- c) *Meditation for enlightenment*

4. LUNG DISEASES

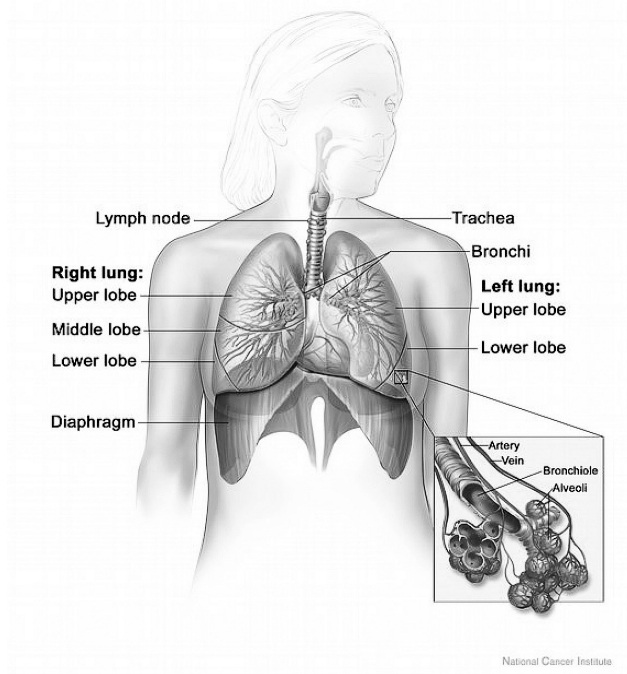
There are also many types of lung diseases like lung cancer, asthma and



*Figure 5.
Metabolomic finger
printing happiness
or sadness.*

tuberculosis. These diseases must be treated by specialists with anti-biotic medicines.

(New genes for lung disease discovered



16/12/2009 16:15:00

New genetics study by consortium led by universities of Leicester and Nottingham)

“Scientists have discovered five genetic variants that are associated with the health of the human lung. The research by an international consortium of 96 scientists from 63 centers in Europe and Australia sheds new light on the molecular basis of lung diseases.



The new findings provide hope for better treatment for lung diseases like Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) and asthma”.

Asthma is caused by the inflammation of the trachea, making

patients have trouble breathing, causing wheezing, asphyxia, tightness of the chest, and decreasing lung capacity. People from all walks of life may contract asthma.

Nowadays, many people practice meditation not only for relieving stress, anxieties, depression, lowering blood pressure, overcoming loss of sleep, good digestion etc. but also for alleviating asthma to enjoy a happy life.

The New York Times ran an article on August 14, 2003 entitled:

“Is Buddhism Good for Your Health?”

By Stephen S. Hall

Published: September 14, 2003

“The “”Monk experiments”” at Madison are beginning to intersect with a handful of small but suggestive studies showing that Buddhist-style meditation may have not only emotional effects but also distinct physiological effects. That is, the power of meditation might be harnessed by non-Buddhists in a way that along with reducing stress and defusing negative emotion, improves things like immune function as well.

The power of the mind to influence bodily function has long been of interest to scientists, especially connections between the nervous, immune and endocrine systems. Janice Kiecolt-Glaser and Ronald Glaser, researchers at Ohio State University, for example, have done a series of studies showing that stress typically impairs immune function, though the exact woof and weave of these connections remains unclear.

Interestingly enough, the Buddhist subjects themselves are largely open to scientific explanation of their practices. “”Buddhism is, like science, based on experience and investigation, not on dogma,”” Matthieu Ricard explained in an e-mail message to me last month. The religion can be thought of as “”a contemplative science,”” he wrote, adding, “”the Buddha always said that one should not accept his teachings simply out of respect for him, but rediscover their truth through our own experience, as when checking the quality of a piece of gold by rubbing it on a piece on stone, melting it and so on.””

In July, I joined Davidson and several colleagues as they stood in a

control room and watched an experiment in progress. On a television monitor in the control room, a young woman sat in a chair in a nearby room, alone with her thoughts. Those thoughts -- and, more specifically, the way she tried to control them when provoked -- were the point of the experiment.

Davidson hypothesizes that a component of a person's emotional makeup reflects the relative strength, or asymmetry, of activity between two sides of the prefrontal cortex -- the left side, which Davidson's work argues is associated with positive emotion, and the right side, where heightened activity has been associated with anxiety, depression and other mood disorders.

His research group has conducted experiments on infants and the elderly, amateur meditators and Eastern adepts, in an attempt to define a complex neural circuit that connects the prefrontal cortex to other brain structures like the amygdala, which is the seat of fear, and the anterior cingulate, which is associated with "conflict-monitoring." Some experiments have also shown that greater left-sided prefrontal activation is associated with enhanced immunological activity by natural killer cells and other immune markers.

When one scientist in the control room said, "All right, here comes the first picture," the young woman visibly tensed, gripping her elbows. Electrodes snaked out of her scalp and from two spots just below her right eye. And then, staring into a monitor, the young woman watched as



*African children
practice meditation*

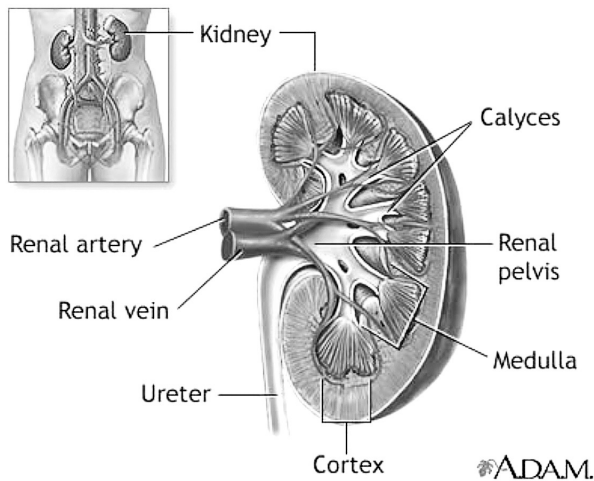
a succession of mostly disturbing images flashed on a screen in front of her -- a horribly mutilated body, a severed hand, a venomous snake poised to strike. Through earphones, the woman was prompted to modulate her emotional response as each image appeared, either to enhance it or suppress it, while the electrodes below her eye surreptitiously tapped into a neural circuit that would indicate if she had successfully modified either a positive or negative emotional response to the images.

“”What”s being measured,”” Davidson explained, “”is a person”s capacity to voluntarily regulate their emotional reactions.””

The above paragraph shows that the mind may influence a great deal on the body, particularly the immune system, which protects the cells in the body and therefore increases the protection from illnesses.

5. KIDNEYS

There are many types of kidney diseases. Kidney stones must be treated



by surgery or Western medicine. One of the most effective medications is the *Pipérazine* (French Medicine) which breaks the stones into pieces and flushes them out through urination. Nowadays, the most advanced technique is to shoot the stones with laser.

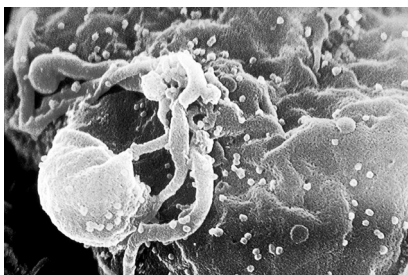
Kidneys usually deteriorate because of diabetes. Kidneys disease may

cause impotence and infertility which could have an effect on family happiness.

“Dr. Benson of the Harvard Medical School has researched and tested the effects of meditation on the health and body. In the book called “The Relaxation Response” (1975) (ref. Braphan Ukranun 1998 pp.111), which has introduced the concept of meditation to many Americans, he states that meditation can treat diseases such as cancer because it helps the patient to release tension, bring the will power to fight and the consciousness of being in control of the life. He has found that depression, hopelessness, loneliness and despair, psychological conditions very prevalent in westerners, can be alleviated with meditation. Apart from this, meditation can also help heart conditions and high blood pressure. But most interesting of all is that meditation can help people who have difficulty conceiving children. Dr. Benson states that such people are generally unhappy, anxious and hot-tempered but with the regular practice of mediation, they can become healthy and strong, more cheerful and more able to conceive children. The meditation that Dr. Benson advocates to bring such results is one that uses breath control and the silent repetition of a mantra to bring peace and tranquility. Dr. Benson acknowledges that this technique of “insight meditation” can be most effective”.

6. HIV (SIDA) (HUMAN IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS)

Scanning electron micrograph of HIV-1 (in green) shows that budding

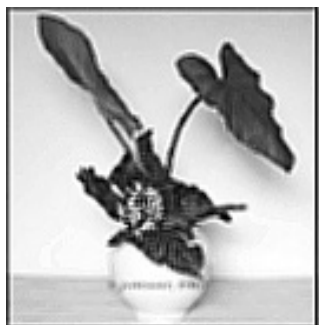


from cultured lymphocyte. Multiple round bumps on cell surface represent sites of assembly and budding of virions.

HIV (*Human immunodeficiency virus*) is caused by the *lentivirus*, which belongs to the group *retrovirus*. They destroy the immune system (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome: AIDS). The HIV virus gradually kills the white cells CD4 + T (a type of white blood cell or leukocyte) and makes the body susceptible to bacteria and viruses. The number of white cells CD4+T also decreases

in those who are suffering from stress, therefore increasing the speed of destruction of the immune system. This virus infects through 4 different channels: blood transfusion, sexual intercourse, mother's milk, and needle sharing (**Source:** Wikipedia).

In July 2008, an experiment was conducted by Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn at UCLA on the treatment of AIDS.



The experiment lasted 8 weeks and was reported with the title "Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction" (MBSR). On average, a meditating person has the number of white cells CD4+T increasing to 20; a person without sitting meditation has the white cells CD4+T decreasing to 185.

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Mindfulness meditation training effects on CD4+ T lymphocytes in HIV-1 infected adults: A small randomized controlled trial.

J. David Creswell, Hector F. Myers, Steven W. Cole, and Michael R. Irwin

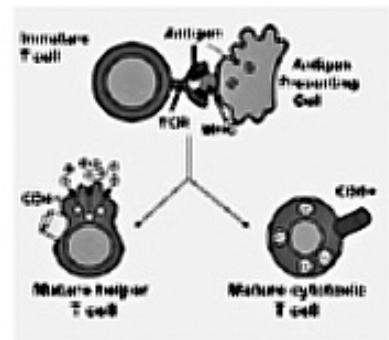
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The publisher's final edited version of this article is available at Brain Behav Immun.

"...Specifically, the 8-week MBSR participants had a raw mean increase

of 20 CD4+ T lymphocytes, whereas the 1-day control participants had a raw mean decrease of 185 CD4+ T lymphocytes from baseline to post-intervention”.



This result shows that Mindfulness meditation causes the white cells CD4+T to increase; the white cells have the ability to slow down or to stop the growth of AIDS.

On 16.4.2009 Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn published a new book, “*Opening to Our Lives — Jon Kabat-Zinn’s Science of Mindfulness*”. Dr. Kabat-Zinn has published about 10 books altogether on Meditation and Therapy in CD and paper form. Readers are

encouraged to find information on Practicing Mindfulness. It is free of charge (Free Information on Mindfulness Practices. Transform yourself!).

Function of T helper cells: Antigen presenting cells (APCs) present antigen on their Class II MHC molecules (MHC2). Helper T cells recognize these, with the help of their expression of CD4 co-receptor (CD4+). The activation of a resting helper T cell causes it to release cytokines and other stimulatory signals (green arrows) that stimulate the activity of macrophages, killer T cells and B cells, the latter producing antibodies.



“Diseases of the modern age, such as cancer, AIDS or psychological conditions

caused by the stress and strain of daily life, have complicated symptoms and are progressively more difficult to treat. Consequently, modern medicine has started to look for different methods of treatment to cure such conditions and to help people get their lives back on an even keel again. This kind of research is carried out objectively within the confine of the medical science. However, on a more spiritual level, we can find within Buddhism various principles and practices which can be used to bring peace and happiness to the mind and the good health to the body. In particular, meditation has brought beneficial effects to the many people who have learned how to practice it.

Thus, many modern doctors admit that the mind can control the body's performance. The mind can be an important cause of sickness in the body and it inevitably follows that it can also provide the cure. Learning how to meditate can develop both the body and the mind, bringing improvements to the health at the same time. Nowadays, treating a disease like cancer depends on science and technology, and the use of such procedures as radiation and surgery. Even although these modern procedures constitute the progress of medical science; in Thailand at the present one method of treating these diseases which is attracting much attention is holistic. In fact, a group has been established which practices according to the methods of treatment purposed by Dr. Sathit Intharakamhaeng. These methods place an emphasis on understanding how nature works in our lives, including maintaining a correct diet. Nevertheless, importance is also placed on our mental processes and on learning how to meditate. As Dr. Sathit once stated:

"Actually, living a holistic life doesn't only mean eating a natural diet. It also means changing and correcting your lifestyle by learning how to meditate, learning how to reduce stress in everyday life ..." ("Cheowit" 1998 pp.37).

In this way, Dr. Sathit has taken hold of the Buddhist precept which teaches us that rust, which comes from iron, can corrode and destroy that same iron. Human minds are the same. If we have learned how to meditate and have minds which produce positive thoughts then our bodies will become stronger and healthier if our minds produce negative thoughts

then, like the rust on the iron, this will inevitably be a danger to us...

From a holistic point of view, cancer grows from both physical and mental causes. If one cannot change one's mind then it follows that one cannot change one's body." ("Goo-ne-ne" 1998 pp.127).

Buddhadasa Bhikku has stated that meditation can treat diseases of the body and the mind. He has demonstrated the importance of breath control called the mindfulness of breathing; the more we can regulate our breathing the more able we become to fight disease. Breathing is a fundamental human function and therefore bears a relation to the normal balance of our bodies. As he stated: "We have to realize that our breathing affects our nervous system, our thoughts, our awareness and the different mechanisms within our bodies. The liver, the kidneys, the intestines and the stomach are all related to our breathing." (Buddhadasa Bhikku M.B.B. pp.21).

7. CANCER

The specialized medical term is *malignant neoplasm*. The cause of cancer, *medical term malignant neoplasm*, is a class of diseases in which a group of cells display uncontrollable growth (division beyond the normal limits)...

Senator Barack Obama before being elected The US President A psychiatrist, Dr. Ainslie Meares, announced

the results of the continuing research in the 1960s with the title, "Relief Without Drug." He recorded the simple meditation techniques (from Hindu perhaps, he has not been acquainted with Buddhist meditation, HQ), as the most effective treatment for anxieties, fear, stress, and chronic pain".

"Dr. Ainslie Meares, an Australian psychiatrist, published research chronicles in the 1960s entitled Relief Without Drugs. In his journal he records that simple meditation techniques, which he adopted from Hindu practices, was a powerful means of combating anxiety, and reducing





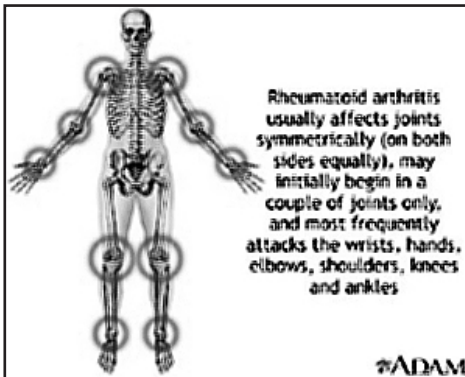
stress and chronic physical pain”.

www.christaudio.com/meditation.html.

These techniques may also help the body function normally, and a good immune system may help cancer patients to relax and reduce the symptoms.

A scientist at UCLA, Jon Kabat Zinn, also applies mindfulness meditation in the program MBSR (Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction) to treat cancer patients. The experiment testing 90 patients revealed that stress and anxieties were decreased in 31% of the participants, and depression was reduced in 67% of participants. The strengthening of the immune system may help alleviate cancer symptoms.

8. RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS



Arthritis is the inflammation of one or more joints which results in pain, swelling, stiffness, and limited movement. There are over 100 different types of arthritis.

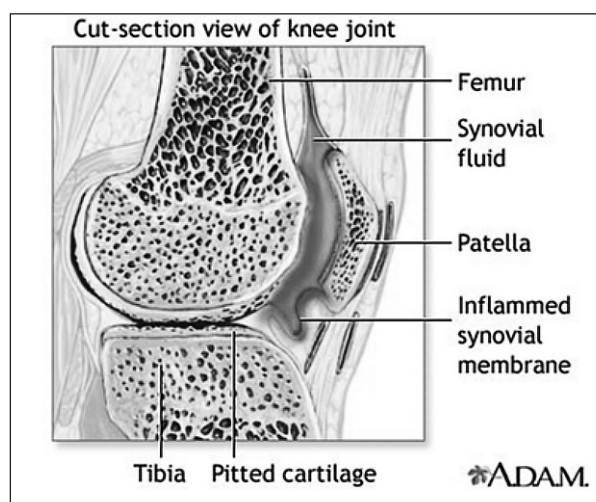
- Symptoms
- If you have arthritis, you may experience:
 - Joint pain
- Joint swelling
- Reduced ability to move the joint
- Redness of the skin around a joint
- Stiffness, especially in the morning
- Warmth around a joint

The current treatment is medication, acupuncture, and massage. But many medications can cause side effects like bone thinning and effects on kidneys...Many scientists conducted similar experiments and found that the most effective medication is

meditation, which has been practiced by Buddhists for more than 2000 years. Meditation helps the patients become relaxed, happy, peaceful, and optimistic so that they can avoid many illnesses. (*ScienceDaily* magazine published on 2.10.2007).

Meditation Therapy for Rheumatoid Arthritis Patients

ScienceDaily (Oct. 2, 2007)



“A revered contemplative practice for centuries, meditation has recently inspired research into its therapeutic value for everything from anxiety disorders to heart attack prevention. A painful, progressive autoimmune disease, rheumatoid arthritis (RA) is associated with

a high risk of depression--double the risk of the healthy population, by conservative estimates--and various forms of psychological distress. Increasingly, RA patients are turning to alternative therapies like meditation to ease the toll of their disease.

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) is a meditation training program developed by Dr. Kabat-Zinn and colleagues at the University of Massachusetts Medical School. MBSR teaches participants to relate differently to thoughts and emotions, and continually focus the mind on the present moment to increase clarity and calmness. The program has been shown to improve psychological symptoms in patients with fibromyalgia,

cancer, and multiple sclerosis, among other conditions”.

9. MENOPAUSE & HOT FLASHES

Hot flashes occur during the menopause period because the estrogen hormone is decreasing. Middle-aged women suffer from fatigue, boredom, amnesia, sweating, headaches, nausea, and redness on the face, neck and breast. They feel hot as the blood flows intensely in the body. These symptoms may last many years. In Western medicine, Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) is often used. The doctors nowadays are recommending breathing techniques or Mindfulness Meditation to help women relieve stress and sadness and feel more optimistic and forget the illness. Advertisements on the Web for CDs or Videos encourage meditation to achieve a peaceful life.



Miss World competitors in a meditation session in Viet Nam, 2009

Two websites below are available for your need if you wish:

- Causes and Cures For Hot Flashes

3 min 16 sec - Oct 22, 2008 / www.youtube.com

- How to Relieve Hot Flashes with Breathing

1 min 50 sec - Oct 17, 2008 / www.ehow.com

10. DIABETES

Diabetes is usually contracted by obese (overweight) patients from all walks of life who rarely do physical exercises and consume a lot of foods high in fat and sugar content. Foods will be digested and transformed into glucose (chemist formula: $C_6H_{12}O_6$). This nutrient permeates blood

to nourish the body cells. To be able to permeate the cells, a catalyst, insulin, is needed. The pancreas is the organ which produces insulin, but if there is any reason the body cannot use the insulin effectively, glucose will accumulate in the blood. After a few years, sugar levels will increase and cause diabetes. Diabetes leads to heart diseases, high blood pressure, kidney disease, amnesia and pain.

Treatments: Patients are encouraged to do physical exercises, obey a strict eating regimen, avoid eating and drinking sweet foods, and take prescribed medication.

Recently, medical doctors and scientists have conducted experiments of meditation to help patients feel happy, optimistic and to reduce stress because stress makes the level of sugar in the blood increase. According to an article on the Web 24.7.2006 entitled, "Meditation and the Art of Diabetes Management," Joseph B. Nelson has been practicing meditation for 34 years and teaching it for the last 9 years. He concludes that practicing meditation for 20 minutes every day makes people feel relaxed, optimistic, and peaceful; therefore they could avoid contracting many illnesses. The experiments conducted by Dr. Dean Ornish and Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn mentioned in the heart diseases section also came to the same conclusion.

Treatments for the 10 illnesses correspond with what the Buddha teaches: "*Thousands of dharma is created by the Mind*". So are our illnesses. Nobody can avoid birth, illnesses, old-age and death, but the three poisons: *Greed, Anger and Delusion* are the most devastating forces that destroy living cells in the body (our immune system) and create opportunities for contracting illnesses and shorten our life span. Buddhist Meditation and Reciting the Buddha's name are a couple of the dharma doors helping people live harmoniously with others and the environment, achieve inner and outer peace, lessen most illnesses and create a happy and meaningful life as well as gain more intelligence. Meditation is not reserved exclusively for Buddhists. Those who are not Buddhists can also practice meditation or recite their favorite celebrities' or leaders' names. Of course these leaders should have been a role model in order to make this technique more effective.

HOW TO PRACTICE MEDITATION



Breathing Meditation

Generally, the purpose of breathing meditation is to calm the mind and develop inner peace. We can use breathing meditation alone or as a preliminary step to reduce our distractions before engaging in a Lamrim meditation

A Simple Breathing Meditation

The first stage of meditation is to stop distractions and make our mind clearer and more lucid. This can be accomplished by practicing a simple breathing meditation. We choose a quiet place to meditate and sit in a comfortable position. We can sit in the traditional cross-legged posture or in any other position that is comfortable. If we wish, we can sit in a chair. The most important thing is to keep our back straight to prevent our mind from becoming sluggish or sleepy.

The first stage of meditation is to stop distractions and make our mind clearer and more lucid.

We sit with our eyes partially closed and turn our attention to our breathing. We breathe naturally, preferably through the nostrils, without attempting to control our breath, and we try to become aware of the sensation of the breath as it enters and leaves the nostrils. This sensation

is our object of meditation. We should try to concentrate on it to the exclusion of everything else.

At first, our mind will be very busy, and we might even feel that the meditation is making our mind busier; but in reality we are just becoming more aware of how busy our mind actually is. There will be a great temptation to follow the different thoughts as they arise, but we should not resist this but slowly returning to remain focused single-pointedly on the sensation of the breath. If we discover that our mind has wandered and is following our thoughts, we should immediately return it to the breath. We should repeat this as many times as necessary until the mind settles on the breath.

Benefits of Meditation

If we practice patiently in this way, gradually our distracting thoughts will subside and we will experience a greater sense of inner peace and relaxation. Our mind will feel lucid and spacious and one will feel more refreshed. When the sea is rough, sediment is churned up and the water becomes murky, but when the wind dies down the mud gradually settles and the water becomes clear. In a similar way, when the otherwise incessant flow of our distracting thoughts is calmed through concentrating on our own breathing patterns, our mind becomes pleasantly lucid. One should stay within this state of mental calmness for a while even if it can only be experienced for a temporary moment in any given day.

Breathing meditation is only a preliminary stage of meditation, but it can be quite powerful. We can see from this practice that it is possible to experience inner peace and contentment just by controlling the mind, without having to depend upon external conditions.

Much of the stress and tension we normally experience comes primarily from our mind.

When the turbulence of distracting thoughts subsides and our mind becomes still, a deep feeling of happiness naturally arises from within. This internal feeling of contentment helps us to cope with the difficulties of daily life. Therefore, much of the stress and tension we normally experience comes from our mind. This is because many of the problems

we experience, including ill health, are caused or aggravated by this type of stress. Just by doing this type of breathing meditation for at least ten or fifteen minutes a day, one will be able to reduce this kind of stress. One will eventually experience a calm, spacious feeling in the mind, and typical problems will begin to leave the mind and fall away. This will allow difficult situations to become easier to deal with. We will then naturally feel warm and well disposed towards other people and our relationships with others will gradually improve.

Due to its wonderful effects as we have seen, meditation should be brought into all schools and hospitals in all nations, especially Latin America and Africa to improve the intelligence of students and help patients to be able to shorten their medical treatment routine.

Disclaimer: This article is written as part of my research in Meditation and disease treatments by physicians and scientists. All information relating to this article is given the source for the readers' convenience. Some medicines listed in the article are the ones I have used in the past. If anyone wants to try them, please consult with your doctor before using.