

RESEARCH PROVES MEDITATION IS GOOD FOR YOU

➔ The practice of meditation dates back thousands of years and can be traced through different societies across the globe. While the benefits of meditation have long been revered in Eastern civilizations, Western medicine has begun to recognize its impact as well, with many research studies reporting both psychological and physiological effects. “We don’t know exactly why meditation works for so many different conditions, but we know that it does,” said Jacob Manjooan, MD, a board-certified psychiatrist at Southern Hills Hospital and Medical Center. “When it comes to managing anxiety, depression, high blood pressure and other conditions, incorporating meditation into your life may be a component to overall health and happiness.”

HOW TO START MEDITATING

There is a multitude of meditation methods, but many clinical research studies have focused on the Transcendental Meditation technique. “I recommend Transcendental Meditation to my patients because it’s a simple technique that yields great results. Other meditation techniques ask you to imagine a relaxing image or a series of mantras, but Transcendental Meditation asks you to clear your mind completely and focus only on the moment,” Manjooan said.

Dr. Manjooan’s tips for meditating

- 1 Sit in a comfortable position with your eyes closed, in a quiet room free of distractions.
- 2 Relax your muscles one by one, a technique called progressive muscle relaxation.
- 3 Steady your breathing. Manjooan noted that abdominal breathing is important because it relaxes your diaphragm, so be sure your belly, not your chest, inflates when you inhale.
- 4 Clear your mind and focus either solely on your breath, or repeating a single word with each exhale. When thoughts come into your head, simply acknowledge them and let them pass.

Do this every day for 15 to 20 minutes. If you’re having trouble at first, don’t panic. “Starting a meditation practice is a lot like starting a new exercise regimen. It can be difficult at first — our minds are not trained to relax and be silent — but make it part of your daily routine and keep practicing until it gets easier. After four or five times, you’ll start to see a difference,” Manjooan said.

WHO SHOULD MEDITATE?

Nearly any healthy person can adopt a meditation routine. Meditation is not recommended for patients with schizophrenia or some types of psychosis, though, because it can exacerbate symptoms.

CREATED AND PRESENTED BY | SOUTHERN HILLS HOSPITAL & MEDICAL CENTER

HEALTH BENEFITS OF MEDITATION

“For a long time, meditation was considered a spiritual or religious practice, but we’ve found it extends far beyond that. It can elicit a physiological response in people who meditate regularly,” Manjooan said. The benefits of meditation are far reaching, and the research is ongoing, but here are some notable ways meditation can improve your health:

■ Anxiety and depression

Meditation can decrease anxiety, stress and depression while increasing emotional regulation, awareness, self-control, happiness and social connections. “It’s the best relaxation technique that can be learned and mastered. For people dealing with anxiety and depression, meditation can be so beneficial that it feels like a spiritual experience,” Manjooan said.

■ Memory, cognition and attention

A 2011 study published in *Psychiatry Research* journal found that meditation can increase the density of gray matter in areas of the brain that govern learning, memory and perspective taking.

■ Pain management and cancer treatment

The National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health, a branch of the National Institutes of Health, found that meditation can help control pain without using the brain’s naturally occurring opiates to do so. The Society for Integrative Oncology also recommends meditation in part of a multidisciplinary approach for cancer patients to help reduce their symptoms, including pain, anxiety, depression and insomnia.

■ High blood pressure and heart health

Meditation is proven to help lower blood pressure for patients with high blood pressure and people who have an increased risk of developing high blood pressure, especially teens. It’s also suggested to help lower resting heart rate, reduce the thickening of coronary arteries in hypertensive adults and even reduce the risk of heart attack and stroke.

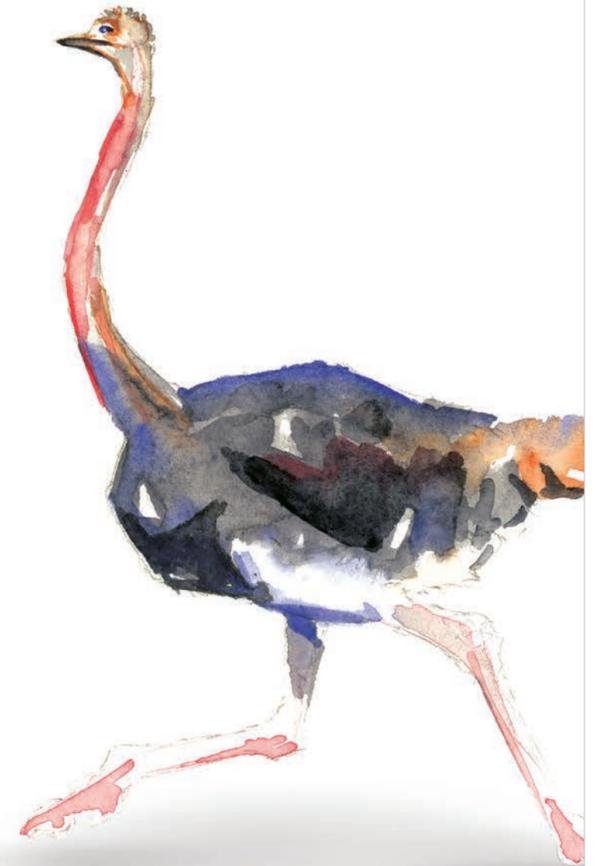
■ Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) and ulcerative colitis

Some studies have suggested that meditation can reduce the severity of symptoms for IBS and ulcerative colitis patients.

■ Immune system

Meditation can help strengthen and regulate the immune system by reducing the chemical identifiers of inflammation. It can also reduce stress-induced inflammation and other types of chronic inflammation that contribute to disease.

The *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience* journal has published studies reporting that meditation can cause significant neurological changes in the brain that indicate an increased level of introspection, awareness, response control and compassion. In short, long-term meditation can actually change your brain structure and the way you think.



AN OSTRICH IS
THE FASTEST

LAND BIRD.

ANOTHER FACT: Our ER
is pretty quick, too.

Text **ER** to **23000**

Message and data rates may apply.
For more info visit texterhelp.com