

## Calming Yoga Music at Bedtime Could be Good for Your Heart

A new research has shown that listening to yoga music at bedtime is good for the heart. Dr. Naresh Sen, the study author, Consultant Cardiologist at HG SMS Hospital, Jaipur, India, said, "We use music therapy in our hospital, and in this study, we showed that yoga music has a beneficial impact on heart rate variability before sleeping." The body's heart rate changes as a normal response to being in "fight or flight" or "rest and digest" mode. These states are regulated by the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems, respectively, and together comprise the autonomic nervous system. High heart rate variability shows that the heart can adapt to these changes. Conversely, low heart rate variability indicates a less adaptive autonomic nervous system.

This study investigated the im-



part of listening to yoga music, which is a type of soothing or meditative music, before bedtime on heart rate variability. The study included 149 healthy people who participated in three sessions on separate nights: (1) yoga music before sleep at night; (2) pop music with steady beats before sleep at night; and (3) no music or silence before sleep at night. At each session, heart rate variability was measured for five minutes before the music or silence started, for ten minutes during the music/silence, and five

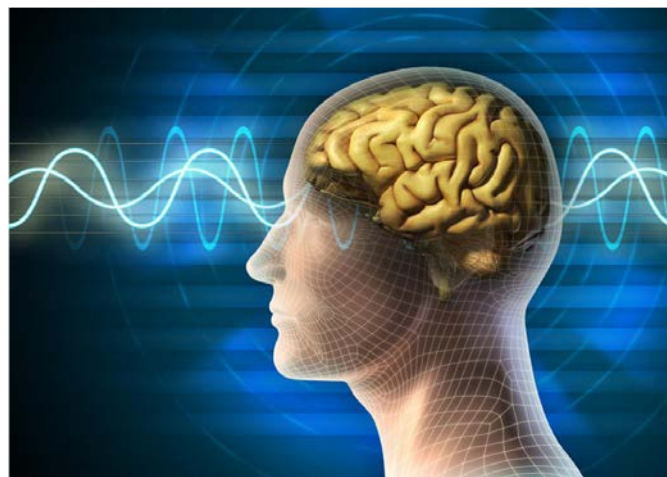
minutes after it had stopped. Also, anxiety levels were assessed before and after each session using the Goldberg Anxiety Scale. The level of positive feeling was subjectively measured after each session using a visual analog scale. The average age of participants was 26 years. The researchers found that heart rate variability increased during yoga music, decreased during pop music, and did not significantly change during the silence. Anxiety levels fell significantly after the yoga music, rose significantly post the pop music, and increased after the no music session. Participants felt significantly more positive after yoga music than they did after pop music. Dr. Sen noted that holistic therapies such as music cannot replace evidence-based drugs and interventions, and should only be used as an add-on.

## Study Finds Yoga Helps Treat Anxiety

A new study reveals yoga improves symptoms of generalized anxiety disorder, Led by researchers at NYU Grossman School of Medicine, a new study found that yoga was significantly more effective for generalized anxiety disorder than standard education on stress management. The study has been published in *JAMA Psychiatry*.

"Our findings demonstrate that yoga, which is safe and widely available, can improve symptoms for some people with this disorder and could be a valuable tool in an overall treatment plan," says lead study author Naomi M. Simon, MD, a professor in the Department of Psychiatry at NYU Langone Health.

For the study 226 men and women with a generalized anxiety disorder were randomly assigned to three groups, either CBT, Kundalini yoga, or stress-management education, a standardized control technique. After three months, both CBT and yoga were found to be significantly more effective for anxiety than stress management. Specifically, 54 percent of those who



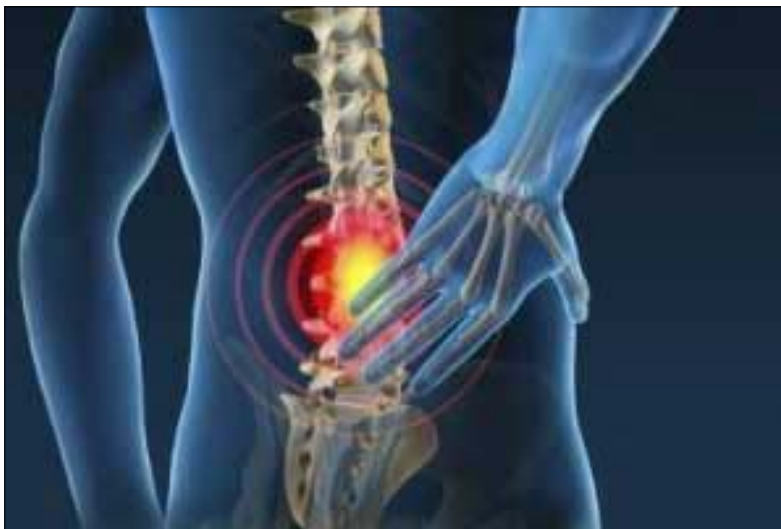
practiced yoga met response criteria for meaningfully improved symptoms compared to 33 percent in the stress-education group. Of those treated with CBT, 71 percent met these symptom improvement criteria. Each treatment was administered in groups of three to six participants, over weekly two-hour sessions for 12

weeks with 20 minutes of daily homework assigned. "This study suggests that at least short-term there is significant value for people with a generalized anxiety disorder to give yoga a try to see if it works for them. Yoga is well-tolerated, easily accessible, and has several health benefits," says Dr. Simon.

### Self-Administered Acupressure Could Help Lower Back Pain

A recent study finds that acupressure can improve chronic pain symptoms in the lower back. "Acupressure is similar to acupuncture, but instead of needles, the pressure is applied with a finger, thumb or device to specific points on the body," says Susan Murphy, ScD, OTR, an associate professor of physical medicine and rehabilitation at Michigan Medicine and lead author of the study. The study has been published in *Pain Medicine*.

In the study, the research team randomly assigned 67 participants with chronic low back pain into three groups: relaxing acupressure, stimulating acupressure, or usual care. "Relaxing acupressure is thought to be effective in reducing insomnia while stimulating acupressure is thought to be effective in fatigue reduction," Murphy says. Participants in the acupressure groups were trained to administer acupressure on certain points of the body, and spent between 27 and 30 minutes daily, over the course of six weeks, performing the technique. "Compared to the usual care group, we found that people who performed stimulating acupressure experienced pain and fatigue improvement and



those that performed relaxing acupressure felt their pain had improved after six weeks," Murphy says.

Murphy notes that chronic pain is difficult to manage and people with the condition tend to have additional symptoms such as fatigue, sleep disturbance, and depression. "Better treatments are needed for chronic pain," Murphy says. She says this study highlights the benefits of a non-pharmacological treatment option that patients could perform easily on their own and see positive results.

### Study Shows Mindful Hypnotherapy Helps Relieve Stress

A new treatment for stress combining mindfulness with hypnotherapy has shown positive results in a Baylor University pilot study. "Mindfulness is a type of meditation that involves focusing attention on present moment awareness. It can help people cope with stress, but can require months of practice and training," said researcher Gary Elkins, Ph.D., director of the Mind-Body Medicine Research Laboratory at Baylor University. The study is published in the *International Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis*.



Hypnosis interventions are typically brief and have been used in pain and symptom management in clinical practice. The study's basic premise is that using hypnosis to deliver mindfulness goals could have many advantages, Elkins said. "Combining mindfulness and

hypnotherapy in a single session is a novel intervention that may be equal to or better than existing treatments, with the advantage of being more time-effective, less daunting and easier to use," he said. "This could be a valuable option for treating anxiety and stress reduction." As a brief intervention, mindful hypnotherapy could be widely disseminated and is an innovative new mind-body therapy, he said.

For the study of mindful hypnotherapy, the research team recruited 42 individuals with self-reported high stress. Half took part in an

intervention of one-hour weekly individual sessions that included hypnosis inductions and suggestions for greater mindfulness. Participants also were given self-hypnosis audio recordings lasting about 20 minutes, each with suggestions for hypnotic induction, relaxation, and greater mindfulness. The second group did not take part in the intervention. Intervention ma-

terial focused on present-moment awareness, nonjudgmental awareness of the five senses, nonjudgmental awareness of thoughts and feelings, self-hypnosis, compassion for self and others, awareness of personal values, and meaning in life, and transition to long-term practice of mindful hypnotherapy, Elkins said. At the study's end, the intervention group reported a large

decrease in stress and a significant increase in mindfulness. Most were highly satisfied with the number of sessions, the ease of home practice, and the clarity of content, Elkins said. The average participant practiced almost every day, and overall satisfaction with the intervention was 8.9 on a scale of 10.

## Yoga and Meditation Help to Reduce Chronic Pain

A mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) course was found to benefit patients with chronic pain and depression, leading to significant improvement in participant perceptions of pain, mood, and functional capacity, according to a study. The findings of the study have been published in the *Journal of the American Osteopathic Association*. Most of the study respondents (89%) reported the program helped them find ways to better cope with their pain.

"Curing means eliminating disease, while healing refers to becoming more whole," says Cynthia Marske, DO, an osteopathic physician and director of graduate medical education at the Community Health Clinics of Benton and Linn County. "With chronic pain, healing involves learning to live with a level of pain that manageable. For this, yoga and meditation can be very beneficial." The study found mindful meditation and yoga led to significant improvements in patients' perceptions of pain, depression, and disability. Following the course, the Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9) scores, a standard measure of depression, dropped by 3.7 points on a 27-point scale. According to Dr. Marske, some patients experience a similar drop from the use of an antidepressant. "Chronic pain often goes hand-in-hand with depression," says Dr. Marske. "Mindfulness-based meditation and yoga can help restore both a patient's mental and physical health and can be effective alone or in combination with other treatments such as



therapy and medication."

Study participants received instruction in MBSR, a systematic educational program based on training people to have an awareness of the self in the present moment, and a non-judgmental manner. The findings bolster other evidence that MBSR can be a useful adjunctive treatment for chronic pain while improving perceived depression. "The bottom line is that patients are seeking new ways to cope with chronic pain and effective non-pharmaceutical treatments are available," says Dr. Marske. "Our findings show meditation and yoga can be a viable option for people seeking relief from chronic pain."