

Prayer, Meditation and the Relationship to Weight Loss, Heart Disease and Diabetes

A Clinical Nutritionists Perspective

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It's A Lifestyle.... Not a Diet!!!

Today, most people expect that their nutritionist's primary focus with nutrition counseling is to **restrict certain foods** or **prescribe a dietary supplement**. **This is not true** says Christopher Fuzy, M.S., R.D. President / Nutritionist - **Lifestyle Nutrition Inc.** in **Plantation Florida**. Most Registered Dietitians usually do not incorporate a homeopathic or alternative medical approach to nutrition counseling.

The latest evidence clearly correlates that job stress, environmental stress, and / or relationship stress, has long - term effects on overall health and can very definitely cause weight gain, heart disease and diabetes.

In a well-designed study, researchers monitored the stress hormone called cortisol. Cortisol is a hormone that is naturally elevated when the body is in periods of stress such as after surgery or while your body is defending against an infection. The researchers looked at the blood cortisol levels of tax accountants before and during tax season. They measured the cortisol levels throughout a 24 period for three months and found out that the demands from the daily workload of completing tax returns was enough to raise cortisol levels significantly.

When cortisol levels are increased then blood insulin levels are also increased. It is insulin that causes sugar to be removed from the blood and used for energy by your body's cells or if not needed it will be stored as fat. The researchers concluded that the long term (chronic) elevation of cortisol from job stress, environmental stress and/or relationship stress can cause or accelerate weight gain, increase blood fats and cause insulin resistance, which are pre-cursors to heart disease and diabetes.

Why Meditate? Because It's Good Medicine

When it comes to stress reduction the best and most popular method is meditation. Many forms of meditation and prayer have been used to manage the day-to-day stress. As a practicing nutritionist for 15 years, I allocate five minutes of every one- hour nutrition counseling session with my clients to implement a nutritional meditation in my office.

According to research conducted by David Eisenberg, MD, and his colleagues at Harvard Medical School, mind/body medicine is the most widely used alternative medicine used today. At the heart of mind/body medicine lays the age-old practice of meditation, a quiet, simple technique that has an extraordinary power to boost disease resistance and maintain overall health. Focusing the mind continuously on one thought, phrase or prayer for a period of time -- naturally leads to the "relaxation response," changes in the body that are deeply restorative and which quicken healing. These changes include reductions in heart rate, blood pressure, respiratory rate, oxygen consumption, blood flow to skeletal muscles, perspiration, and muscle tension, as well as an improvement in immunity. The relaxation response works much like pushing a "reset" button, enabling your body to return to a state of optimal balance. Many studies have been done that show the effectiveness of meditation in treating a number of health conditions.

Women's Health

Some remarkable benefits are possible for women who meditate regularly. One study found that women with PMS (premenstrual syndrome) reduced their symptoms by 58%. Another study found that women going through menopause could significantly reduce the intensity of hot flashes.

Even those women struggling with infertility can benefit: In a study of a 10-week group program that included meditation (along with exercise and nutrition changes), the women had significantly less anxiety, depression, and fatigue, and 34% became pregnant within six months.

The Healthy Heart

Regular practice of meditation has been found to significantly reduce blood pressure in people with hypertension. These reductions can endure over the long term: In one study, the reductions achieved during an eight-week program were still in place three years later.

Other studies have focused on meditation in relation to heart disease. For example, patients with coronary-artery disease who meditated daily for eight months had nearly a 15% increase in exercise tolerance. Patients with ischemic heart disease (in which the heart muscle receives an inadequate supply of blood) who practiced for four weeks had a significantly lower frequency of premature ventricular contractions (a type of irregular heartbeat).

Patients undergoing heart surgery can also significantly lessen anxiety, pain and need for medication during and after an angioplasty.

The Immune Response

There's also evidence that meditation has immune-enhancing effects. Medical students who meditated during final exams had a higher percentage of "T-helper cells," the immune cells that trigger the immune system into action.

Cancer patients have also experienced the benefits of meditation. In one study, patients with metastatic (spreading) cancer who meditated with imagery regularly for a year had significant increases in natural-killer cell activity.

Meditation 101

Though a variety of meditation techniques exist, there are basic elements that anyone can master. Doing as little as 10 minutes per day is enough to begin to see benefits.

1. Sit or lie in a comfortable position with your eyes closed.
2. Focus your attention on the repetition of a word, sound, phrase or prayer, doing this silently or whispering. An alternative is to focus on the sensation of each breath as it moves in and out of your body or picture yourself in a beautiful relaxing place. The key is to relax yourself so you feel like you are partially asleep while being awake.
3. Concentrate on life changing prayers or thoughts that you may want to incorporate to better your life nutritionally and spiritually.
4. Every time you notice that your attention has wandered (which will occur naturally), gently redirect it back, without judging yourself.

Christopher Fuzy M.S., R.D. the President of Lifestyle Nutrition, has private offices in Fort Lauderdale & Boca Raton Florida. He has practiced Nutrition Counseling for 20 years, has a Masters Degree, and a Bachelors Degree in Clinical Dietetics. Chris completed clinicals in the Texas Medical Center, Houston and was the Chief Clinical Dietitian at Plantation General Hospital. Mr. Fuzy has set up well over 700 physician offices nationwide. For a complimentary consultation please call 954-561-0166 or visit www.AboutMyDiet.com & for Health Care Professionals www.PhysicianWellnessProgram.com

