

Maharishi Vedic Medicine

Latest research findings

Indian Medicine Can Reverse Artery Hardening
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NEW YORK (Reuters Health) - One year of a multi-component program based on traditional Indian medicine was able to reverse the thickening of blood vessel walls known as atherosclerosis, or hardening of the arteries, in healthy older people, a new report shows.

Atherosclerosis is a major risk factor for heart attack and stroke.

The program, based on the 4,000-year-old tradition of Vedic medicine, included Transcendental Meditation, antioxidant herbal supplements, a diet low in fat and high in fruits and vegetables, yoga exercises designed to reduce stress, and walking. Participants meditated twice daily for 20 minutes, and walked for 30 minutes a day.

This is the first time, lead author Dr. Robert Schneider of the Center for National Medicine and Prevention in Fairfield, Iowa, told Reuters Health, that a combination mind-body technique has been shown to reverse atherosclerosis. "Actual regression is unusual," he said. He noted that cholesterol-lowering drugs called statins have also been reported to cause regression, "but you need heavy-duty artillery."

The findings are published in the American Journal of Cardiology for April 15.

"Using several modalities of this natural system together creates a synergistic effect, which was more effective than modern approaches," Schneider noted. His findings show, he added, that this type of approach is feasible in older people. Eighty percent of study participants complied with the Indian medicine recommendations.

"The results are quite encouraging," Schneider added. "The program could be used widely in practice settings."

As part of a larger study sponsored by the National Institutes of Health, Schneider and colleagues had randomly assigned 20 healthy individuals age 65 and over to the traditional medicine intervention, 14 to usual care and nine to a modern medicine intervention. The modern medicine approach included aerobic walking,

comprehensive stretching and exercises for a total of 60 minutes 5 times a week, dietary advice and a standard multi-vitamin supplement.

After 1 year, those in the traditional medicine group were nearly four times as likely to exhibit a decrease in thickness of the carotid artery walls, as measured by ultrasound, than participants in the other two groups combined.

On average, the thickness of artery walls in the traditional medicine group was reduced by 0.318 millimeters (mm), compared with a 0.22 mm increase in the usual care subgroup and a 0.082 mm decrease in the modern medicine subgroup.

Schneider pointed out that the traditional medicine intervention led to greater benefit than reported in previous studies of single therapies, including beta-blockers, statins and high-dose anti-oxidants, and Transcendental Meditation. This approach also appears to be more acceptable to patients because its dietary restrictions are not "radical," he said, and the level of exercise is one with which they can easily comply.

Schneider noted that the Indian diet limits fat, but also includes "medicinal foods or health-promoting foods."