

# Be Well Aware – Health Article



## Benefits of Meditation

**Overview:** Meditation comes in many different forms, but the base elements remain the same throughout; A quiet place with few distractions; a specific, comfortable posture; a focus of attention (a word, phrase, object or sensation); and an open attitude (taking note of distractions without letting them bother you). Some forms influence the mind and body in different ways, and we are still discovering the depth to which meditation can benefit us. More and more people have taken up meditative practices in recent years and with that increase, we have learned a few things about the benefits of meditation.

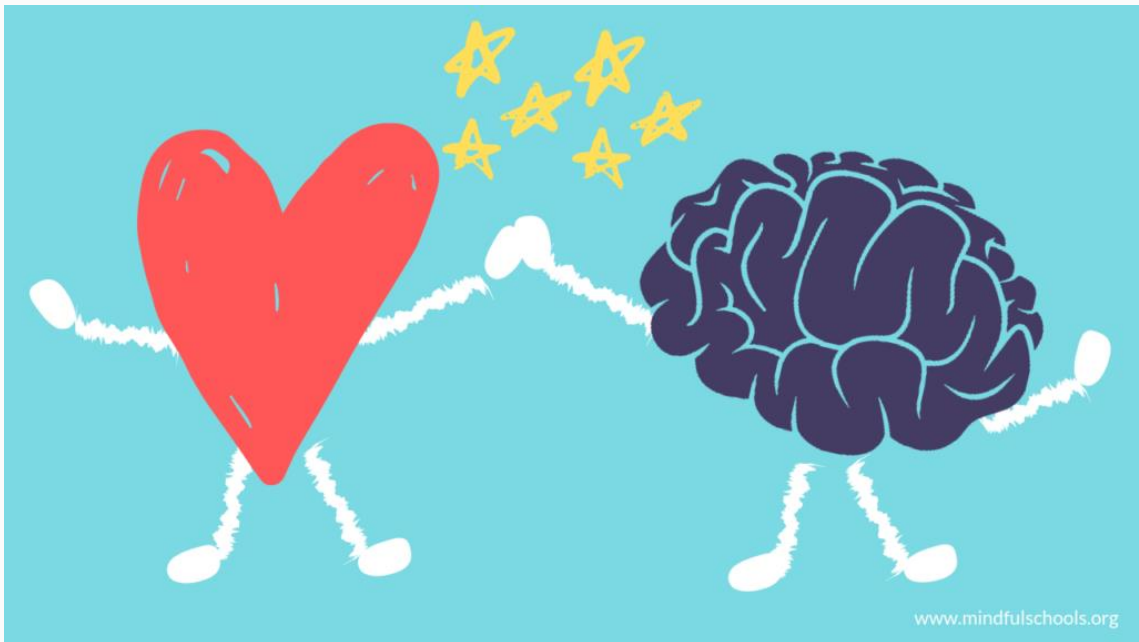
**Science of benefits:** Meditation has been studied for its effects on different conditions and the evidence suggests that a consistent practice can ease multiple symptoms. The severity of symptoms from irritable bowel syndrome, ulcerative colitis, stress, anxiety, depression, insomnia, fatigue, menopause, and inflammation appear to be improved by meditation. Blood pressure may be lowered in individuals at increased risk for high blood pressure through Transcendental Meditation. The research around meditation and its effects on relieving pain and aiding in smoking cessation is not in total agreement but there is evidence to suggest chronic low-back pain and smoking cravings can be reduced by mindfulness training. Smoking cessation and relapse prevention also appear to be improved by meditation. All in all, there are many health benefits associated with meditation, but it should not be used to replace conventional care or delay having a medical problem addressed by a healthcare provider.



*Continued on next page...*

**Meditation and the brain:** It appears that meditation practiced over a long period of time can cause the brain to physically change by adding folds in the outer layer which can increase our ability to process information. Research also suggests that practicing meditation may slow, stall or even reverse age-related changes to the brain. Meditation also seems to have an impact on the amygdala, part of the brain that processes emotions, and that different types of meditation effect it in different ways.

**Safety considerations:** Meditation is considered safe for pretty much everyone. With forms of meditation that include movement, it may be difficult for individuals with a physical limitation. There have also been a few cases where meditation may have worsened symptoms in individuals with certain psychiatric problems such as anxiety and depression. It is recommended that these individuals speak with their healthcare provider and meditation instructor to make them aware of the practice and condition.



---

**References:**

<https://nccih.nih.gov/health/meditation/overview.htm>

<http://dbhdid.ky.gov/dbh/documents/ksaods/2015/Snyder1.pdf?t=14515404212019>

[https://www.va.gov/PATIENTCENTEREDCARE/Veteran-Handouts/Introduction\\_to\\_Mindful\\_Awareness.asp](https://www.va.gov/PATIENTCENTEREDCARE/Veteran-Handouts/Introduction_to_Mindful_Awareness.asp)