

Why Meditate?

The thought of meditation often brings cringes of resistance and images of uncomfortably sitting, legs crossed, in a still position for long periods of time. Most people resist the idea of meditation because they cannot imagine themselves slowing down.

We live in a world that is extremely fast-paced. Television, computers, cell phones, text messaging, e-mails and instant messages overload us with information; they keep us connected to the world 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Much of the information is challenging — news of war, earthquakes, crime and scandals become difficult to hear. We hate it; we fear it — yet we are drawn to it and often forced to listen.

Most of us seek peace and harmony. We often feel this is lacking in our lives. We strive to be happy yet few of us attain this. Individual distress and tensions combine to create stress in society. Meditation can provide the respite one needs.

Meditation techniques have been used by many different cultures throughout the world for thousands of years. Jewish spiritual leaders teach meditations based in Jewish mysticism, called Kabbalah. Kabbalah teaches that meditation is a direct way to experience God.

Today, many people use meditation as a form of mind-body medicine. It is becoming an increasingly popular way to embrace the silent in between our thoughts. Meditation can have a great impact on one's sense of calm and can have a significant impact on health and wellness.

The National Institutes of Health and its National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicines sponsor ongoing studies to find out more about meditation's effects, how it works, and for what dis-

eases and conditions it may be most helpful. According to the NIH, practicing meditation has been shown to induce some changes in the body's "fight or flight" response, which is controlled by the autonomic nervous system. People use meditation for anxiety, depression, pain, stress and insomnia, to manage the side effects of cancer treatment as well as physical and emotional symptoms associated with many chronic illnesses.

Meditation refers to a group of techniques designed to assist a person to focus his/her attention and eventually slow the stream of thoughts that normally occupy the mind. Ongoing practice can change how a person relates to thoughts and emotions. The benefits of meditation are reached when it is done in a quiet location with few distractions.

Ideally, meditation is done in the sit-

ting position. While it is important to be comfortable, it is also important to sit in a way that promotes awareness and focus. Focusing one's attention is also important. Most meditations suggest focusing on an object (such as the flame of a candle), the breath or even a mantra (a specific word or set of words). When interruptions or wandering thoughts occur, attention is brought back to the breath, object or mantra.

As an acupuncturist and practitioner of holistic medicine, I find meditation a very valuable tool. It assists me in maintaining balance and perspective in everyday life. □



Julie Silver
Columnist

Julie Silver, MSW, Dipl. Ac., is a National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine board-certified acupuncturist and owner of Acupuncture Healthcare Associates of Michigan, Inc., a West Bloomfield holistic health clinic featuring acupuncture, traditional Chinese medicine and naturopathic medicine. E-mail her at acuhealer@sbcglobal.net.

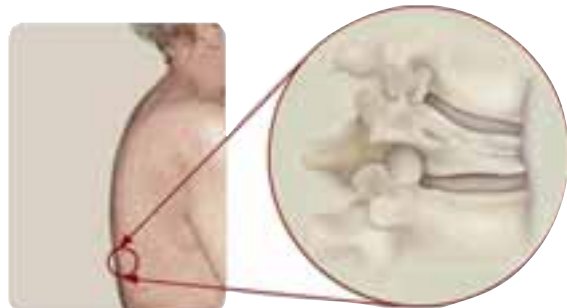
ASK THE DOCTOR

New Options Available To Treat Spinal Fractures From Osteoporosis

Osteoporosis, in which bones become fragile and easily broken, causes over 700,000 spinal fractures annually in the U.S.—more fractures than in the hip and wrist combined. Approximately two-thirds of all spinal fractures go undiagnosed or untreated due to the absence of symptoms or difficulty determining the cause of symptoms, leading some to call osteoporosis a "silent disease."

Since 50 percent of women and 25 percent of men older than 50 will have an osteoporosis-related fracture in their lifetime and bone loss can begin as early as 30, now is the time to take a closer look at osteoporosis and new options for treating fractures caused by osteoporosis. Through proper diagnosis and treatment, patients with spinal fractures can significantly improve their ability to perform normal activities of daily living and enjoy an overall improvement in their quality of life.

Dr. Louis Radden, Reconstructive Spine Surgeon with Spine Specialists of Michigan, offers some answers.



How common is osteoporosis and to what might it lead?

The National Osteoporosis Foundation cites osteoporosis as a major public health threat affecting 44 million Americans. While a calcium-rich diet, weight-bearing exercise and the avoidance of smoking and excessive alcohol can help prevent bone mass loss, osteoporosis ranks second only to cardiovascular disease as a leading healthcare problem according to the World Health Organization.

With osteoporosis, bones in our spine, hip and wrist deteriorate and become susceptible to fractures. In the spine, small fractures lead to compression of the vertebral body (called vertebral compression fractures or VCFs). Left untreated, these VCFs create a curvature of the spine, sometimes referred to as "dowager's hump." Over time, this curvature can become more pronounced, painful and debilitating.

How do I know if I have osteoporosis?

Bone loss happens without symptoms—it doesn't hurt or cause much trouble at first, though left unchecked it might cause a lifetime of disability and even hasten death. Talk to your doctor about bone health and taking a bone density test.

What happens to you if you have a spinal fracture?

After experiencing one fracture, your risk of a second fracture is greatly increased. In addition, just one fracture affects how weight is distributed through the spine, thus placing higher than normal stress on the front of the spine which contributes to the risk of future fracture. With additional fractures, it can become progressively difficult to walk, eat, and sleep due to pain and the unnatural spinal alignment. See a doctor to determine your condition and appropriate treatment, as there may be different explanations for why you are experiencing back pain.

What options are there if I have a spinal fracture?

Traditional treatments for spinal fractures include extended bed rest, pain medication and back braces, all of which can relieve pain but do not address the deformity caused by the fracture. Open surgery is also an option, but it is more invasive than non-surgical management and is typically reserved for patients with neurological complications. Balloon Kyphoplasty, a minimally invasive procedure, is designed to treat the fracture and restore the vertebra to the correct position. Balloon Kyphoplasty has been demonstrated to significantly reduce back pain, correct spinal deformity and improve quality of life.

How is Balloon Kyphoplasty performed?

Balloon Kyphoplasty is a minimally invasive procedure performed by a spine specialist. It can be performed using either a local or general anesthesia. It typically takes about one half hour to treat each fracture and may require an overnight hospital stay.

Does insurance cover Balloon Kyphoplasty?

In most cases, Medicare provides coverage for kyphoplasty. Other insurance may also provide coverage. Check with your insurance carrier or doctor to find out about coverage.

What can Balloon Kyphoplasty do for me if I have a spinal fracture?

If you have a spinal fracture, Balloon Kyphoplasty can restore vertebral body height, significantly reduce back pain and increase mobility, often shortly after the procedure. In addition to pain reduction, patients experience an increased ability to return to such simple, everyday activities as walking, reaching, bending and lifting. Patients also report improved mental health, vitality, social function and emotional health.

Are there risks associated with Balloon Kyphoplasty?

Although the complication rate with Balloon Kyphoplasty has been demonstrated to be low, as with most surgical procedures, there are risks associated with Balloon Kyphoplasty, including serious complications. Complications can include myocardial infarction (heart attack), cerebrovascular accident (stroke), pulmonary embolism (bone cement leakage migrates to the lungs), cardiac arrest (heart stops beating) or nerve or spinal cord injury that may cause pain, weakness or paralysis.

6621 W. Maple Rd.
West Bloomfield
248-661-4700

14555 Levan Rd. Suite 116
Livonia
734-464-0400

30055 Northwestern Hwy. Suite 270
Farmington Hills
248-865-4262

SPINE SPECIALISTS OF MICHIGAN P.C.
Dr. Louis N. Radden
RECONSTRUCTIVE SPINE SURGERY

1366510