[IMAGE]

Preserving Your Brain Through Meditation

Meditation has been practiced for centuries as a way of helping to balance a person's physical, mental and emotional states. Research has shown that meditation can produce significant positive changes in the brain. However, the bulk of this research has been conducted on people who make meditation a central focus of their lives, or who practice it for significant periods of time each day. What about the effect of meditation on the general population?

To answer this question, researchers used magnetic resonance imaging to compare the brains of 20 meditation practitioners and 15 people who had no experience with meditation or yoga. The meditation practitioners all practiced a type of meditation called Insight an average of six hours per week, and had practiced Insight an average of 9.1 years.

The MRI scans showed that certain regions of the brain associated with sight, hearing, emotional processing and cognitive function were significantly thicker in the meditation group compared to the control group. The thickness was more pronounced in older, more experienced meditation practitioners, which suggested that meditation could help reduce thinning of the frontal cortex, which occurs as people age.

There are literally dozens of meditation techniques that can be practiced. Some are quite simple and can be picked up with only a little practice; others may require months or even years to master. If you would like to learn more about meditation, talk to your doctor about some of the different methods available.

Reference:

Lazar SW, Kerr CE, Wasserman RH, et al. Meditation experience is associated with increased cortical thickness. *NeuroReport* Nov. 28, 2005;16(17):1893-1897.

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