

Effect of Meditation on Elderly

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.52403/ijshr.20230404>

ABSTRACT

Meditation has been used to help people feel at peace and in recent years, meditation has increased in popularity due to its scientifically-proven benefits. As we know the senior citizens as they advance in age, the health also gradually deteriorating. It is proven through various research studies that the elders can revitalise through a simple practice of Meditation. Various journals and articles to explore this fact through PubMed, Google scholar and other studies. Total 30 studies were shortlisted, from which 20 of them with proper methodology were reviewed and reported. All these studies proved that simple meditation has various benefits that can improve the physical, mental, social and spiritual health and thus the elders can improve the quality of their life.

Keywords: Meditation, Elderly, quality of life

INTRODUCTION

The global population is aging. According to World Health Organization (2018), the percentage of people in the world who are 60 or older is predicted to rise from 12% to 22% between the years 2015 and 2050. Elderly people frequently have age related difficulties. As people get older, their physical issues will get worsen^[1].

We have drifted so far from our lives in the current era that we have forgotten the serenity and strength of our true minds, gentle pressures can tip our mental,

emotional and physical health out of balance and put everyone at risk for disease, especially the elderly^[2].

People frequently encounter a variety of physical and mental health Problems at this age, such as chronic pain, cognitive decline and depression. Their quality of life may be significantly impacted by these obstacles which may also make it challenging for them to participate in activities they once found enjoyable. Fortunately, research has been done and many advantages of meditation has shown, that can help seniors deal with these difficulties and enhance their general wellbeing^[3].

Due to the hectic pace of modern life meditation has consequently become increasingly popular and crucial, particularly for the elderly who want to maintain their physical health and live stress and anxiety free lives. The goal of meditation is to achieve a mentally clear and emotionally calm state by focusing ones attention on a specific object, thought or activity. Numerous advantages have been demonstrated for people of all ages, including enhanced emotional wellbeing, decreased stress, anxiety and improved physical health. But given the particular difficulties seniors face, the advantages of meditation for them might be especially significant^[4].

Yoga, asana, and other techniques are the most effective and straightforward ways for growing elders to meditate. Regular meditation for even five minutes can make a person feel good and improve their health [5].

BENEFITS OF MEDITATION: -

A contemporary philosopher says, “No meditation, No life. Knowing meditation is knowing life”. This aphorism is entirely applicable in the present. The detrimental effects of stress are unavoidable in this day and age. The way of life is literally been forgotten by people. They are constantly busy pursuing materialistic goals and adding to stress [6].

Improving cognitive function is one of the main advantages of meditation for seniors. According to research, regular meditation can enhance memory and attention span, skills necessary for preserving one’s independence and sustaining relationships with others [7].

PSYCHOLOGICAL BENEFITS: -

Meditation has been shown to offer many benefits. Psychologically also it has various benefits such as to reduce stress and anxiety, research shows that it may also help enhance the mood, promote healthy sleep patterns and boost cognitive skills. Improving cognition and delaying the onset of dementia by the simple practise of mindfulness meditation are the other benefits for the elderly who practice it regularly [8].

Improves Concentration & Memory

Meditation gets more powerful and resilient with practice. Elderly people can reap the benefits of meditation even with brief practice. They can focus for longer periods of time, thanks to its calming effects on the mind [9].

The mental clarity that comes from meditation keeps the mind young. Age related reminiscence can benefit from meditation and it can at least partially help dementia patients with their memory [10].

Mental Benefits of Meditation

The brain is able to easily absorb new information when it is in the alpha range (Alpha brainwaves are slower, and higher in amplitude. A person who sit down to rest/relax is often in an alpha state), which meditation creates, speeding up the healing process. The brain changes from the better, becoming more tranquil, lovely, serene and tender than ever. The brain gets internally cleaned out and fed through meditation. Meditation aids in maintaining equilibrium in elderly people who are anxious or emotionally disturbed. The following are some of the meditation’s major mental advantages.

Boost psychological steadiness.

An uptick in Joy.

Increases mental clarity.

Reduction in anxiety and an increase in creativity.

The growth of instincts.

The height of tranquillity.

Clearness of thought.

Elderly people’s mental health can benefit from meditation, too. Research has shown that meditation can be a successful treatment for depression, which is a common condition for many elderly people. It has been demonstrated that regular meditation can lessen the science of depression and anxiety. Meditation can also help seniors manage the stress and uncertainty that frequently come with getting older, enabling them to keep a positive outlook and live life to the fullest [11].

Reducing stress:

Various studies have shown that meditation has tremendous effect on all age group and in a special way for elders. Stress generally raises many hormones including glucocorticoids, catecholamine, growth hormones and prolactin. That has many negative effects and puts elderly people at risk for serious health problems [12]. The main signs of stress are disturbances in sleep, depressive symptoms, anxiety and blood pressure elevation. According to

studies stress revealed illness like IBS (Irritable Bowel Syndrome), stress disorders are improved by meditation^[13].

One can concentrate during meditation and get rid of the constant stream of disorganised thoughts that might be stressing them out. The process may lead to improved mental and emotional health^[14].

Decreases Anxiety: -

Additionally, medication helps older adults who suffer from anxiety disorders to lessen their panic attacks and phobias. Controlling anxiety brought on by stressful situations can be done through medication^[15].

Because of their potential to ease anxiety and improve cognitive dysfunction in older adults, meditation techniques have appeal as a treatment for depression and late-life anxiety disorders^[16].

Expands awareness of oneself: -

By recognising the inner thoughts and feelings that surface, throughout the medication practice can help in self-awareness. Mindfulness medication aims to recognise thought and emotional pattern without passing judgement, it gives one time and space to concentrate without outside interference^[17].

PHYSICAL BENEFITS: -

The General health of the elderly is improved by medication in addition to the common advantages already mentioned. The body experiences distinct changes during meditation. Significant adjustments are made to the body's external and internal processes. Every cell in the body receives energy from regular medication^[18].

Following are the few benefits:

Improves physical health: -

Regular Meditation has been shown to lower blood pressure, strengthen the immune system, and reduce inflammation, all of which can aid in the prevention or treatment of chronic illnesses like heart disease, diabetes and arthritis. A useful tool for controlling the physical discomfort that

frequently comes with aging. Medication, which has also been shown to lessen chronic pain^[19].

Helps in quitting bad habits: -

Medication promotes self-control, virtue growth, and recovery from addictions. According to research, meditation improves attentional control, willpower, impulse control, emotional regulation and understanding the root causes of addiction^[20].

Improves Sleep: -

Everyone is aware that insomnia affect the majority of elderly people. Being at meditation can aid in reducing unwanted thoughts and sleeplessness^[21]. Comparing mindfulness meditation to a structured program that focuses on changing bad sleep habits and creating a bedtime routine, older adults with moderate sleep disturbances report that mindfulness meditation improves their quality of sleep^[22].

SOCIAL BENEFITS: -

A variety of social changes may occur as people age, such as the death of friends and loved ones, retirement, and a decline in social activities. This may result in loneliness and isolation, which can be detrimental to one's physical and mental health. According to research, medication helps people of all ages connect with others and build new relationships by boosting feelings of empathy, compassion and connection. Additionally, meditation can help senior citizens establish a stronger bond with themselves, enabling them to recognize and value their own special talents and qualities^[23].

Meaning and Purpose: -

A greater sense of meaning and purpose in life can also be achieved by senior citizens through meditation, in addition to these specific advantages. As people get older, they might have a harder time discovering hobbies or activities that make them feel happy and fulfilment, In order to find a new

sources of meaning and purpose in their lives. Elderly people who practice meditation can connect with their inner selves and learn what truly matters to them. Consequently, there may be an improvement in overall wellbeing, happiness, and contentment^[24].

Brings kindness in individuals: -

Positive feelings toward the other are sparked by meditation. For instance, Meta is a type of meditation that fosters the development of compassionate feelings and thoughts. People become adept at forgiving through practice. In other words, the greater the effort one makes in Meta meditation, the more positive emotions they will feel in general^[25].

Everyone wants to be happy, but many people struggle with how to achieve it. Love-kindness addresses our shared vulnerability to suffering and change, which evokes compassion and other uplifting feelings^[26].

SPIRITUAL BENEFITS: -

Spiritual benefits of meditation make the person realize the eternal truth and let go of all that had happened and will happen. The present is where one wants to be and find solace in. The need to practice spiritual meditation comes from an innate longing to see and beyond the chaotic surrounding. This meditation encourages seniors to be fully aware of the present and their existing surroundings. It can give a sense of calm, peace and balance that can benefit both their emotional well-being and their overall health. Spirituality gives strength, the inner strength to manage difficult situations and to keep ever-smiling^[27].

Spiritual Benefits of Meditation for Elderly.

There is no religion in meditation. Anyone can meditate and benefit from its health benefits, regardless of ideology. The practice of meditation may be a good choice for elderly people who wish to engage in

spiritual pursuits. Following are meditation's top three spiritual advantages. Elderly people who regularly meditate tend to see themselves as invisible elements of the infinite universe.

Elders are expanded into happiness, peace, and Infinity when they are in a meditative state. They experience being established in harmony with the Cosmos because of this quality that the environment offers. Elderly people who practice meditation report real personal changes. Older people will naturally find the purpose of life the more they understand about themselves.

Elders become aware of this vast universe through meditation. It amplifies the energy around them, gives them more ability to comprehend and see clearly, and strengthens their spirituality. Their physical, mental, and spiritual well-being are brought into lyrical harmony. Their way of thinking and seeing will be very distinct from others^[28].

The profound inner peace and bliss that one experiences with daily meditation are incomparable. Spiritually meditation can lead the person to a deep state of Samadhi and inner freedom or enlightenment^[27].

MEDITATION TECHNIQUES FOR SENIORS: -

Elderly people should approach meditation with caution and seek advice from a qualified professional, as is important with any new practice. Elderly people might have physical limitations that make some types of meditation more challenging, or they might already have underlying health issues that meditation could make worse. Also, some elderly people might be reluctant to try meditation or might think that it isn't a practice that applies to them. Elderly people can understand the advantages of meditation with the help of a careful education and guidance, and it can be customized to meet their particular needs. Thus, it can be concluded that meditation has a wide range of important and positive effects on seniors^[29].

Here a few simple meditation tips for seniors: -

Simple guided meditations that simplify the guesswork out of practise and are simple to get accustomed, can help if the mind is prone to wandering or turning out.

If the person can maintain an upright sitting position, it will help keep his or her energy focused.

When the body is easily fatigued but the mind is sharp, try lying down or relaxing in a comfortable chair while concentrating on a range of bodily sensations. It's easier for the mind to stay alert when it's active and focused while the body is relaxed. Till the person becomes accustomed to this technique, follow a guided meditation.

For seniors who have trouble focusing for any length of time or maintaining physical posture, mini- sessions are advised. Being mindful and present for a few breathes or a few minutes- is a great practice. Once the person is prepared, start over by letting their body and mind rest.

A type of meditation that can reduce anxiety and possibly have spiritual or psychological advantages is finding a word or sentence- a prayer, a motivational phrase, a mantra- that speaks to the person and he or she can return to. Any type of exercise that combines disciplined physical movement with mental focus, like yoga or tai chi, has the potential to be good for the body and the mind. Additionally these activities support older adults in maintaining their vital qualities of flexibility and balance. Modifications will probably happen naturally if the person is an experienced senior who has been sitting for a while. This could mean choosing shorter sessions, adopting a more comfortable posture, or practising walking meditation more frequently to maintain a healthy body^[30].

CONCLUSION

This study focuses primarily on the benefits of meditation for the elderly population. It has highlighted many advantages of meditation: Benefits of physical, mental, spiritual and psychological perspective. We

are aware that as a person ages, their health will progressively deteriorate as well. According to numerous studies, mindfulness meditation has significant impact on a person's physical, mental, spiritual and psychological wellbeing. It also has a significant impact on those who practise it constantly and faithfully. Therefore, it is beneficial to encourage senior citizens to meditate regularly in order to leave a quality of life. As health professionals, it is our duty to share this information with everyone, especially with elderly in order to help them age with dignity.

Declaration by Authors

Source of Funding: None

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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How to cite this article: Jayisamma Varghese, Lissy K J, N Gayathiri, Reema Baxla. Effect of meditation on elderly. *International Journal of Science & Healthcare Research*. 2023; 8(4): 25-30. DOI: [10.52403/ijshr.20230404](https://doi.org/10.52403/ijshr.20230404)
