



Positive effects of MediYoga on blood pressure and cortisol levels in saliva in patients with myocardial infarction.

Background:

Yoga has been practised for around 5,000 years and is proven to offer both physical and mental health benefits. Rehabilitation is particularly important in the case of patients who have suffered a myocardial infarction (heart attack) to reduce a recurrence. This study was designed to investigate the possible benefits of medical yoga, as part of a cardiac rehabilitation programme following a heart attack, and risk factors for heart and cardiovascular diseases.

Method:

Sixty patients diagnosed with myocardial infarction were randomised for standard cardiac rehabilitation and yoga (30 patients) or with a physiotherapist (30 patients). We used MediYoga specially adapted for patients with heart and cardiovascular diseases, with the focus on deep breathing in movements. The yoga sessions were led by a yoga expert once a week for one hour sessions, for three months. Physiotherapy was done twice a week for one hour for three months. Blood pressure and cortisol levels in saliva were measured at the start and after three months.

The patients' own perception of how well they felt was evaluated via questionnaires at the start and the end of the three months.

The findings:

The average age of the physiotherapy group was 62 and for the yoga group, 60. At the beginning of the study average blood pressure was higher in the yoga group compared with the physiotherapy group. (128/75 and 119/69 mmHg respectively). At the end of the three months, the blood pressure of the patients in the yoga group showed a significant reduction (113/71 mmHg), while the blood pressure in the physiotherapy group had increased to 127/71 mmHg. Salivary cortisol fell in the yoga group from 8.5 to 6.0 percent, while it showed a slight but non significant rise from 4.6 to 5.0 nmol/L in the physiotherapy group. Patients in the yoga group stated that they felt their general health had improved, with less anxiety and better sleep.

Conclusion:

MediYoga with yoga with gentle movements, deep breathing and relaxation leads to lower blood pressure, reduced salivary cortisol levels and subjective improved health. These effects can possibly be significant in reducing the risk of a recurrence of heart and cardiovascular diseases.