

TIPS FOR HEALTHY LIVING

Meditation:

Take a stress-reduction break wherever you are

Meditation can wipe away the day's stress, bringing with it inner peace. See how you can easily learn to practice meditation whenever you need it most.

By [Mayo Clinic staff](#)

If stress has you anxious, tense and worried, consider trying meditation. Spending even just a few minutes in meditation can restore calm and inner peace.

Meditation has been practiced for thousands of years. Meditation originally was meant to help deepen understanding of the sacred and mystical forces of life. These days, meditation is commonly used for relaxation and stress reduction. Anyone can practice meditation. It's simple and inexpensive, and it doesn't require any special equipment. And you can practice meditation wherever you are — whether you're out for a walk, riding the bus, waiting at the doctor's office or even in the middle of a difficult business meeting.

Understanding meditation

Meditation, considered a type of mind-body complementary medicine, produces a deep state of relaxation and a tranquil mind. During meditation, you focus your attention and eliminate the stream of jumbled thoughts that may be crowding your mind and causing stress. This process results in enhanced physical and emotional well-being.

Benefits of meditation

Meditation can give you a sense of calm, peace and balance that benefits both your emotional well-being and your overall health. And these benefits don't end when your meditation session ends. Meditation can help carry you more calmly through your day and improve certain medical conditions.

Meditation and emotional well-being

When you meditate, you clear away the information overload that builds up every day and contributes to your stress.

The emotional benefits of meditation include:

- Gaining a new perspective on stressful situations

- Building skills to manage your stress
- Increased self-awareness
- Focusing on the present
- Reducing negative emotions

Meditation and illness

Many healthy people use meditation as a way to relax the body and reduce stress. But meditation also might be useful if you have a medical condition, especially one that may be worsened by stress.

A growing body of scientific research is supporting the health benefits of meditation. But many of the studies aren't of high quality, and some researchers believe it's not yet possible to draw conclusions about the possible benefits of meditation.

With that in mind, some research suggests that meditation may help such conditions as:

- Allergies
- Anxiety disorders
- Asthma
- Binge eating
- Cancer
- Depression
- Fatigue
- Heart disease
- High blood pressure
- Pain
- Sleep problems
- Substance abuse

Be sure to talk to your health care provider about the pros and cons of using meditation if you have any of these or other medical conditions. Meditation isn't a replacement for traditional medical treatment. But it can be useful in addition to your other treatment.

Types of meditation

There are many types of meditation and relaxation techniques with meditation components. But all share the same goal of inner peace.

Ways to meditate can include:

- **Guided meditation.** Sometimes called guided imagery or visualization, with this method of meditation you form mental images of places or situations you find relaxing. You try to use as many senses as possible, such as smells, sights, sounds and textures. You may be led through this process by a guide or teacher.
- **Mantra meditation.** In this type of meditation, you silently repeat a calming word, thought or phrase to prevent distracting thoughts. Transcendental meditation is a type of mantra meditation in which you achieve a deep state of relaxation to achieve pure awareness.
- **Mindfulness meditation.** This type of meditation is based on being mindful, or having an increased awareness and acceptance of living in the present moment. You focus on what you experience during meditation, such as the flow of your breath. You can observe your thoughts and emotions but let them pass without judgment.
- **Qi gong.** This practice generally combines meditation, relaxation, physical movement and breathing exercises to restore and maintain balance. Qi gong (chee-kung) is part of traditional Chinese medicine.
- **Tai chi.** This is a form of gentle Chinese martial arts. In tai chi (TIE-chee), you perform a self-paced series of postures or movements in a slow, graceful manner while practicing deep breathing.
- **Yoga.** You perform a series of postures and controlled breathing exercises to promote a more flexible body and a calm mind. As you move through poses that require balance and concentration, you're encouraged to focus less on your busy day and more on the moment.

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/meditation/HQ01070>