

Thousands of peer-reviewed scientific papers support the idea that mindfulness enhances mental wellbeing and physical health and reduces stress and pain.

The following summary of benefits and evidence is taken from the Oxford Mindfulness Centre website. Each number in brackets refers to research papers which are listed at the bottom.

There is now a lot of evidence that mindfulness benefits many people in the ways reported below but this does not mean it benefits everyone all of the time. There are a range of responses between different people. Some benefit greatly and other less so. However, there does seem to be a correlation between practice and benefits. Those who practice regularly and integrate mindfulness into their lives reap more benefit than those who do not.

- Anxiety, stress, depression, exhaustion and irritability all decrease with regular sessions of meditation. (1)
- Memory improves, reaction times become faster and mental and physical stamina increase. (2) Regular meditators are happier and more contented, while being far less likely to suffer from psychological distress. (15)
- Mindfulness can dramatically reduce pain and the emotional reaction to it. (5 and 6). Recent trials suggest that average pain 'unpleasantness' levels can be reduced by 57 per cent while accomplished meditators report reductions of up to 93 per cent. (7)
- Clinical trials show that mindfulness improves mood and quality of life in chronic pain conditions such as fibromyalgia (8) and lower-back pain, (9) in chronic functional disorders such as IBS, (10) and in challenging medical illnesses, including multiple sclerosis (11) and cancer. (12)
- Mindfulness improves working memory, creativity, attention span and reaction speeds. It also enhances mental and physical stamina and resilience. (13)
- Meditation improves emotional intelligence. (14)
- Mindfulness is at least as good as drugs or counseling for the treatment of clinical-level depression. One structured programme known as Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) is now one of the preferred treatments recommended by the UK's National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence. (16)
- Mindfulness reduces addictive and self-destructive behaviour. These

include the abuse of illegal and prescription drugs and excessive alcohol intake. (17)

- Meditation enhances brain function. It increases grey matter in areas associated with self-awareness, empathy, self-control and attention. (18) It soothes the parts of the brain that produce stress hormones (19) and builds those areas that lift mood and promote learning. (20) It even reduces some of the thinning of certain areas of the brain that naturally occurs with ageing. (21)
- Meditation improves the immune system. Regular meditators are admitted to hospital far less often for cancer, heart disease and numerous infectious diseases. (22)
- Mindfulness may reduce ageing at the cellular level by promoting chromosomal health and resilience. (23)
- Meditation and mindfulness improve control of blood sugar in type II diabetes. (24)
- Meditation improves heart and circulatory health by reducing blood pressure and lowering the risk of hypertension. Mindfulness reduces the risks of developing and dying from cardiovascular disease and lowers its severity should it arise. (25)

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