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HEALTH

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QUICK STUDY

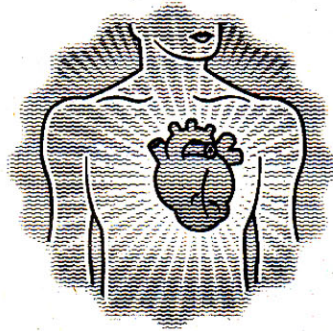
A weekly digest of new research on major health topics

HYPERTENSION

Meditation may help black teens cut their blood pressure.

■ **THE QUESTION** The prevalence of high blood pressure among blacks in the United States is among the highest in the world, and it develops at an early age. Might a mental relaxation technique like transcendental meditation (TM) help stem the development of hypertension among black teenagers?

■ **THIS STUDY** randomly assigned 100 black teens with blood pressure in the high end of the normal range—their daytime readings averaged about 130/



76—to 15-minute TM sessions or 15-minute health- and lifestyle-oriented classroom instruction sessions twice daily for four months. At the end of that period, those who practiced TM had lower blood pressure than when the study began: The reduction was about 3.5 points on both the systolic and diastolic readings. Their heart rates were also lower. The other teens showed little or no change in heart rate or blood pressure. When rechecked four months later, the TM participants had maintained their declines.

■ **WHO MAY BE AFFECTED BY THESE FINDINGS?** Teens at risk of developing high blood pressure. More than 40 percent of blacks older than 20 have hypertension, which increases risk for heart disease and stroke.

■ **CAVEATS** The study did not assess whether differences in posture among TM participants or physical activity among teens in both groups affected the results.

■ **BOTTOM LINE** Young blacks may want to consider TM or other stress-reduction techniques to reduce their risk of developing high blood pressure.

■ **FIND THIS STUDY** April issue of the American Journal of Hypertension; abstract available online at www.sciencedirect.com/science/journal/08957061.

■ **LEARN MORE ABOUT** high blood pressure at www.nhlbi.nih.gov and at www.americanheart.org.