

Meditation plus medication could be the best medicine for migraines

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"Effect of Different Meditation Types on Migraine Headache Medication Use," an article recently published in *Behavioral Medicine*, examines whether or not, and to what extent, a combination of spiritual meditation and migraine medication affects analgesic medication usage.

A wide variety of pharmacological interventions such as opiates, benzodiazepines, and prophylactic medications have been described that offer partial relief to migraine sufferers. Reviews have also described a variety of empirically supported non-pharmacological approaches to preventing or stopping headaches. Recent randomized controlled trials have demonstrated the efficacy of [meditation](#)-based interventions as a treatment for [headache pain](#). Though spiritual meditation has been found to reduce the frequency of migraines and physiological reactivity to stress, little is known about how introducing a spirituality component into a meditation intervention impacts use of analgesic medicine. The results from the study support previous research suggesting that spiritual meditation may be more effective for pain tolerance and migraine coping than non-spiritual meditation alternatives.

In this study, 92 meditation-naïve participants with frequent migraines (>2 per month) were randomly assigned to one of four groups that used a meditation phrase or technique: (1) Spiritual Meditation (exp. "God is love"), (2) Internally Focused Secular Meditation (exp. "I am content"), (3) Externally Focused Secular Meditation (exp. "Sand is soft,"), or (4) Progressive Muscle Relaxation (technique). Then, the participants practiced their assigned meditation technique for 20 minutes per day

over 30 days while completing daily [headache](#) diaries. Headache frequency, headache severity, and pain medication use were recorded and assessed. Migraine frequency decreased significantly in the Spiritual Meditation group compared to other groups. Headache severity ratings did not differ across groups. All four groups showed decreased analgesic medication use over time—however, [medication](#) usage for [migraine](#) headaches had a sharper decline in the Spiritual Meditation group compared to other groups.

More information: Amy B. Wachholtz et al. Effect of Different Meditation Types on Migraine Headache Medication Use, *Behavioral Medicine* (2015). [DOI: 10.1080/08964289.2015.1024601](https://doi.org/10.1080/08964289.2015.1024601)

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