Mindfulness program may help increase physical activity levels

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(HealthDay)—A meditation and stress reduction program may be as effective as structured exercise programs for increasing physical activity, according to a study published in *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise*.

Jacob D. Meyer, Ph.D., from Iowa State University in Ames, and colleagues compared the effects of eight weeks of mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR), aerobic exercise training (AET), and no treatment (control group) during the fall season on moderate-to-vigorous physical activities (MVPA) in healthy adults measured by an Actigraph GT3X+ accelerometer.

Based on data from 49 participants (18 MBSR, 14 AET, 17 control), the researchers found that daily MVPA decreased significantly in all groups from pre-randomization to post-intervention (decreases of 17.9, 5.7, and 7.4 minutes/day for control, MBSR, and AET, respectively), but there were no significant differences between the groups. Bouts of MVPA (?10 minutes) decreased in control and in MBSR (77.3 and 15.5 minutes/week, respectively; between-group difference: P = 0.08), while it increased in AET (5.7 minutes/week; compared to control: P = 0.029 and compared to MBSR: P = 0.564).

"Structured exercise training is something as a field we have used for decades to improve physical activity and physical health," Meyer said in a statement. "To see a similar effect on physical activity from an intervention that focuses on the way someone thinks or perceives the world was completely unexpected."

More information: Abstract/Full Text (subscription or payment may be required)