

String of PEARLS

Practical Evidence About Real Life Situations

Complementary and alternative therapies

PEARLS are succinct summaries of Cochrane Systematic Reviews for primary care practitioners—developed by Prof. Brian McAvoy for the Cochrane Primary Care Field (www.cochraneprietarycare.org), New Zealand Branch of the Australasian Cochrane Centre at the Department of General Practice and Primary Health Care, University of Auckland (www.auckland.ac.nz/uaa), funded by the New Zealand Guidelines Group (www.nzgg.org.nz) and published in NZ Doctor (www.nzdoctor.co.nz).

- Antioxidant supplements do not reduce mortality
- Ginkgo biloba probably not of benefit for cognitive impairment and dementia
- Insufficient evidence for garlic in prevention or treatment of common cold
- Evidence lacking on Chinese medicinal herb treatment for common cold
- Mixed evidence for zinc supplements preventing otitis media in young children
- Touch therapies may have modest effect in pain relief
- Hawthorn extract may have benefit as adjunctive treatment for chronic heart failure

DISCLAIMER: PEARLS are for educational use only and are not meant to guide clinical activity, nor are they a clinical guideline.



Deep breathing may be effective for mild depression in patients with coronary heart disease

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THE PROBLEM: You have a patient who has an angiogram which shows coronary heart disease. He has symptoms of mild depression.

CLINICAL BOTTOM LINE: You may recall your grandmother or mother telling you to take a deep breath when you were stressed. This study tested whether nurse-led home-based deep-breathing was more effective than the control group who received telephone support.¹ The intervention consisted of a four-week home-based deep-breathing programme where the participants had a 30-minute, individual training of slow and deep diaphragmatic breathing technique. The instruction was to breathe at a rate of six cycles per minute for 10 minutes at a time for three times per day. The control group received a stress management course conducted by the same nurse who taught the deep breathing technique. The patients were stable with angiographically-proven coronary heart disease. They were all mild to moderately depressed on the Beck Depression Inventory II. This process has many similarities with meditation which has been shown to prevent recurrent depression.² The deep breathing may be the common factor (this is a single study and not a Cochrane review).

Deep breathing for mild depression

	Success	Evidence	Harms
Deep breathing for 10 minutes three times per day for four weeks	Intervention group significantly less depressed NNT=6	Single study ¹	Not reported

References

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- Kuyken W, Byford S, Taylor RS, Barrett B, Evans A, Byford S, et al. Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy to prevent relapse in recurrent depression. *J Consult Clin Psychol*. 2008;76(6):966–78.

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