

Calming voice and ocean sounds reduce blood pressure in the elderly

Listening to a calming voice and ocean waves on a CD significantly reduces blood pressure in the elderly, research has found.

By Rebecca Smith, Medical Editor
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Guided relaxation CDs reduced blood pressure more than listening to a Mozart sonata in a group of elderly people, a conference was told.

Researchers said if the results could be sustained the methods could lead to reduced deaths from heart disease and stroke.

The small study carried out on 41 elderly people living in retirement homes gave 20 people a 12 minute CD relaxation therapy three times a week for four months and 21 people listened to a 12 minute Mozart sonata for the same period.

The relaxation CD group showed an average drop in their blood pressure of 6.4 per cent compared with almost five per cent in the Mozart group.

Their systolic blood pressure - the maximum pressure when the heart beats and is given at the first number - dropped from 141 to 132 in the relaxation CD group and the Mozart listeners dropped from 141 to 134.

Jean Tang, lead author of the study and assistant professor in the College of Nursing at Seattle University, said: "A three percent to five percent change has been used as the cutting point in clinical research. It has been suggested that a 5 mmHg reduction in systolic blood pressure would result in a nine percent reduction in coronary heart disease related death and 14 percent reduction in stroke related death."

The results were presented at the American Heart Association's 62nd Annual Fall Conference of the Council for High Blood Pressure Research.

"Higher systolic blood pressure is very prevalent in the elderly population," Prof Tang said.

"This program may provide yet another way to help manage hypertension in conjunction with medication, lifestyle changes, exercise, diet and stress management."

She added: "This is a self-regulation tool that promotes patient autonomy in managing their health. Nursing homes or senior living facilities may use this without a doctor's order. It's noninvasive, available and has been around for 20 years."

A few individuals reported their doctors reduced their hypertension medications after using the relaxation therapy regularly but a three-month follow-up showed that only 52 percent of participants continued to use the relaxation



Therapeutic: Ocean sounds reduce blood pressure Photo: CHRISTOPHER PLEDGER

technique regularly.

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