Mindfulness Meditation Reduces Depression in Young Breast Cancer Survivors

Meditation and survivorship classes can both ease depressive symptoms, but meditation also boosts energy.

December 25, 2020 By Alicia Green

Research has shown that younger breast cancer survivors, who are more likely than older survivors to experience high levels of depression, can experience reduced symptoms when they practice mindfulness meditation and participate in survivorship classes, reports University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) Health.

The findings were presented at the virtual 2020 San Antonio Breast Cancer Symposium.

For their analysis, UCLA researchers enrolled 247 women diagnosed with early-stage breast cancer at age 50 or younger who had completed treatment between six months and five years earlier. At the study's start, all had at least mild depressive symptoms.

Participants were randomly assigned to survivorship education, mindfulness meditation or a waiting list group. (Women on the waiting list got to choose the program they preferred at the study's end). Participants who took part in the two intervention programs were compared with the women who didn't receive any intervention during the study.

Women involved in the mindfulness meditation program saw significant changes in their depressive symptoms post-intervention and at three- and six-month follow-ups, results showed. Prior to the program, more than 50% of women were deemed clinically depressed. Following the intervention, that proportion was 30%. These women also saw their fatigue, sleep disturbance and hot flashes decline drastically.

Women in the survivorship classes also experienced a substantial reduction in their depressive symptoms post-intervention and at the three-month follow-up. But this program didn't have the same effect on fatigue and other problems as did meditation.

"Younger breast cancer survivors are in need of targeted, effective programs to help manage stress, depression and other residual side effects of diagnosis and treatment," said Julienne Bower,

PhD, a professor of psychology and psychiatry/biobehavioral sciences at UCLA.

She added, “We are excited to have two new options to offer these survivors and particularly the mindfulness program, which is available online and can be accessed by women across the country.”

For related coverage, read “Mindfulness Meditation Helps Cancer Survivors Cope With Stress” and “Stressed by Cancer and Staying Home? This Website Can Help.”

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.
http://beta.docker.cancerhealth.com/article/mindfulness-meditation-reduces-depression-young-breast-cancer-survivors