

Yoga calms heart pace, cuts anxiety

NEW ORLEANS: People who suffer from irregular heartbeat could see their episodes cut in half if they do yoga regularly, according to a study released in the United States.

Doing yoga three times a week also reduced depression and anxiety while boosting people's opinion of their own social and mental well-being, said the research presented at a New Orleans cardiology conference.

"It appears yoga has a significant impact on helping to regulate patients' heart beat and improves their overall quality of life," said lead study author Dhanunjaya Lakkireddy, associate professor of medicine at the University of Kansas Hospital.

The study followed 49 patients who suffer from atrial fibrillation, an irregular heart rhythm condition that arises when the heart's natural electrical signals fire off in a disorganised way, causing the heart to quiver.

For the first three months of the trial, patients were allowed to engage in their usual exercise routine.

For the second three months, patients attended three yoga sessions per week with a certified instructor, and were encouraged to practice at home with an educational DVD.

All the patients in the study were new to yoga. Researchers measured the subjects' episodes of irregular heartbeats using portable monitors and log books where the patients recorded their own symptoms.

The yoga intervention "significantly reduced" irregular heartbeat episodes by about half on average, compared to the control portion of the study when patients did their own exercises, said the study.

Depression and anxiety scores on self-reported surveys were also lower; and physical function, general health, vitality, social functioning and mental health were higher.

Source: AFP