

Relaxation techniques have some benefit in depression

Clinical question	How effective are relaxation techniques for depression?
Bottom line	Relaxation techniques were better than wait-list, no treatment or minimal treatment, but not as effective as psychological therapies like cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT). Relaxation techniques reduced self-rated depressive symptoms at the end of treatment and at follow-up several months later but data on clinician-rated depressive symptoms were less conclusive. Relaxation techniques have potential as a simple first-line psychological treatment for depression. Those who do not respond within a set time could be offered more complex psychological treatment, such as CBT.
Caveat	A major weakness in the trials was the lack of measurement of functional outcomes. Inconsistent effects were found when comparing relaxation techniques to medication, and there were few data available comparing relaxation with complementary and lifestyle treatments.
Context	Many members of the public have negative attitudes towards antidepressants. Psychological interventions are more acceptable but require considerable therapist training. Acceptable psychological interventions that require less training and skill are needed to ensure increased uptake of interventions. A potential intervention of this sort is relaxation techniques – a simple psychological treatment that can be administered after brief training.
Cochrane Systematic Review	Jorm A F et al. Relaxation for depression. Cochrane Reviews 2008, Issue 4. Article No. CD007142. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD007142.pub2. This review contains 15 trials involving 791 participants.
PEARLS 125, November 2008, written by Brian R McAvoy	

[References]

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