



## Give Your Sinuses a Rest

MINIMIZE EXPOSURE TO ALLERGENS IN YOUR BEDROOM

**DOWN AND FEATHER** pillows may be providing more than just a fluffy place to rest your head. A new report suggests that cat and dog allergens are less likely to penetrate feather and down pillows than synthetic pillows—possibly because these more expensive pillows have covers that are more tightly woven, and therefore keep out allergen particles.

So what if you prefer synthetic pillows, or are allergic to feather ones? You can still minimize your exposure to allergens of all kinds, although you can't eliminate them entirely, by buying anti-allergen covers for all your bedding.

Before you rush out and spend any money on these special covers—which can cost between \$50 and \$100—first get tested for allergies to see if you really need the extra protection. You can also minimize exposure to allergens by washing sheets and mattress pads, at least once per week, in hot water that reaches 130F.

*For more information about allergens, getting tested for allergies, or bedding covers, go to [aaaai.org](http://aaaai.org).*

PAMELA ZAREMBA

## Inner Peace = Healthy Heart

### IT'S LONG BEEN COMMON

knowledge that meditation lowers stress—and so is good for your health and well-being. But now researchers have discovered that practicing a specific type of meditation, known as transcendental meditation (TM), for 20 minutes twice a day can directly lower the risk of stroke and heart disease.

The study compared two groups consisting of men and women suffering from atherosclerosis, the accumulation of fatty plaque on artery walls. One group went to weekly classes that focused on diet

and exercise. The other group practiced TM for 20 minutes twice a day but didn't change diet or exercise habits. After six to nine months, measurements showed artery walls to be significantly thinner in the group that meditated than in the diet-and-exercise group—indicating a drop of approximately 11 percent in the risk of heart attack and a 7.7 to 15 percent drop in the risk of stroke.

Taking a guided class to learn to practice TM properly is recommended. To find a class near you, call 888-532-7686 (LEARN-TM), or visit the Website [tm.org](http://tm.org).

### Here is a basic exercise to help you start meditating:

1. Find a quiet place to sit in an upright position.
2. With palms resting on your thighs, close your eyes.
3. Breathe normally through your nose.
4. Repeat a sound over and over in your mind, like *ohm*.
5. If your thoughts intrude, start repeating the sound again.
6. Do this exercise for 20 minutes twice a day, once in the morning and again in the afternoon.

SOURCE: COLLEGE OF MAHARASHI VEDIC SCHOOL OF MEDICINE, FAIRFIELD, IOWA.

### WM REMEMBER IT

#### PAP-SMEAR REMINDER

Remembering to schedule your Pap test is critical—especially when you consider that 36 percent of women surveyed said they did not go in for the test within the last 12 months. Now [papsmear.org](http://papsmear.org) provides a free annual reminder service for those with E-mail. Just log on and register.

#### MEDICATION GAP

High cholesterol counts in women may not be treated as often with medication—or medical concern—as the same elevated counts in men.

Despite the well-established benefits of cholesterol-lowering medication, a national study of 825 men and women with coronary artery disease found that 35 percent of the women, compared to 55 percent of the men, were taking these medications.

"Women need to be discussing this matter with their doctors," says Michael Miller, MD, a cardiologist at the University of Maryland Medical Center and lead author of the recently published study. "If they are not within optimal levels—an LDL cholesterol level less than 100—women should ask for treatment."

SOURCE: COLLEGE OF AMERICAN PATHOLOGISTS.