



Impact of Long Term Meditation Practice on Sleep: A Matched Controlled Trial

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Objectives: To evaluate the effect of long term practice of Isha yoga meditation technique on sleep patterns in healthy male meditators.

Methods: Whole night polysomnography measures were recorded in 21 male meditators (group mean age \pm S.D., 35.14 \pm 7.98) with a minimum experience of 3 years in Isha yoga meditation. These meditators were compared to 21 male non meditators (group mean age \pm S.D., 35.19 \pm 8.18) matched for their age and education. Meditators and non-meditators underwent independent polysomnographic recordings. Recordings were from the F4, C4 and O1 electrode sites (International 10-20 system of electrode placement) referenced to linked earlobes and bipolar electroculography and electromyography sites.

Results: The percentage of REM sleep, REM latency (Independent samples t-test, $p < 0.001$, $t = -5.346$ and 3.800 respectively) and sleep onset latency ($p < 0.05$, $t = 2.677$) was significantly higher in meditators compared to the non-meditators. A non significant improvement in sleep efficiency in meditators was seen. The 95% confidence intervals for the difference in REM sleep, REM latency and sleep onset latency between meditators and non meditators were [-63.42, -28.61], [21.90, 72.02] and [1.57, 12.22] respectively.

Conclusion: A consistent practice of Isha yoga meditation technique appeared to have a positive impact on sleep as signified by better sleep onset latency and sleep efficiency.

Keywords: Polysomnography, sleep, meditation

