

Hypertension or high blood pressure

“THE SILENT KILLER”

The silent killer it is, because not only does it damage your arteries and vessels but also it presents no symptoms. Therefore you never know you have high blood pressure unless checked or have a serious heart attack. Blood pressure is the force that the heart produces in the arteries as it pumps blood around the body and that of the arteries resisting the flow.

Blood pressure when measured presents two readings: Systolic- that is the pressure when the heart contracts to pump blood to the body. Tester will take the reading when they hear the first sound the heart makes. Diastolic- pressure when the heart relaxes between beats.

Did you know?

High blood pressure can affect anyone at any age. You can be the calmest and relaxed person but still have high blood pressure.

A number of factors put an individual at risk of high blood pressure:

- Inactivity- being inactive puts you at an increased risk of being overweight, and you are inactive your heart rate will be increased therefore making your heart work much harder than it does
- Poor diet- having excessive amounts of salts and fats
- Excess weight means that more blood is required by the body in-order to supply O₂ and nutrients to the tissues. So with the increased amounts of blood being circulated there will be an increase in the pressure on the artery walls
- Excessive drinking overtime will damage the heart
- Smoking- the chemicals in the tobacco can damage the lining of your arteries which will promote their narrowing
- Stress- when stressed you automatically raise your blood pressure

High blood pressure cannot be cured but is managed with medication and a healthy lifestyle. Many people rely solely on medication to manage their high blood pressure, not knowing that diet and exercise play a major role in its management and with that they will also reap all the benefits of exercise.

Just by doing at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise for about 5 days a week and being regular, studies have shown that you will be able to decrease/ lower your blood pressure by as much as 5-15 mmHg and after time you will also be able to decrease your medication dosage as well.

The exercise you do should be at an intensity whereby you are warm, slightly sweaty and a little out of breathe but are still able to talk. Brisk walking would be perfect so grab your pedometer and go for it!



Nutritional tips to help you manage hypertension:

1. Decreasing your sodium intake

Sodium, found in salt is something we need in our diets, but most of us eat too much of it. Reducing salt in the diet can lower blood pressure. Try to have less than 2,400 milligrams of sodium a day - the same as 6 grams of salt a day, or about 1 teaspoon. That includes ALL sodium and salt - what's in the product, and added in cooking and at the table. Most experts suggest limiting any food to less than 500 mg sodium per serving.

Typically high Sodium Foods include:

- Bakery items . breads, biscuits and pastries
- Canned foods
- Convenience foods . frozen dinners, pizza, cereals and packaged mixes
- Cheese
- Deli items . bacon, luncheon meats, corned beef, smoked meats or fish, sardines, anchovies and mayonnaise-based salads such as coleslaw
- Snack foods . crackers, crisps, chips and dips
- Condiments . stock, mustard, ketchup, mayonnaise, salad dressings, pickles, olives and salsa
- Sauces . gravy, barbecue, pasta, teriyaki and soy sauces

Note: You can eat your entire daily requirement of salt, and more, in a single fast food meal!

2. Increasing potassium and magnesium

Make an effort to eat fresh fruit or vegetables at every meal. Ideally half of every meal you eat should be based on either fruit or vegetables.

Take a magnesium supplement that ensures the intake of 500mg elemental magnesium per day. This is a simple cheap way of supporting a healthy blood pressure and boosting your health!

3. Omega 3 fatty acids – eat more fish!

Omega-3 fish oils are a must for anyone with cardiovascular risk. Omega-3s also lower blood pressure. A daily intake of 1,500 mg of EPA plus DHA is suggested. In this case it's the EPA that seems most important.

Fish oils contain both EPA and DHA. A serving of oily fish, such as a piece of wild salmon, can provide around 3,000 mg of omega-3 fats. Of this, perhaps a quarter (800 mg) is EPA. You should aim for a minimum of 400 mg EPA per day. That's either two high-potency omega-3 fish oil capsules a day (3000mg total), or half a serving of an omega-3 rich fish such as sardines, herring, or mackerel. Having three servings of fish a week and an omega-3 fish oil supplement providing around 200 mg of EPA a day is a good way to start.



Flax seed oil is also a good source of Omega-3 fatty acids but take note: You have to eat a balanced diet with enough fruits and vegetables and take a multivitamin supplement to ensure that your body metabolises the oil. Dose: 3 tablespoons of flax seed oil per day. Use in drinks, yoghurt and porridges.

4. Fluid intake

If your blood level goes down, so does your blood pressure. By making your kidneys work harder, certain medications lower blood pressure. But you also lose valuable minerals such as magnesium and potassium. You do better by drinking more water. When there is a lack of water, your body does everything it can to reserve what water it has. That means the sodium level inside your body goes up, because sodium can hold water inside cells. Therefore, your blood pressure goes up. Drinking about 2 liters (8 glasses) of water a day can ensure proper kidney functioning and assist with blood pressure control.

5. Supplementation

- B vitamins (50 mg of B6, 400 mcg of folic acid, and 250 mcg of B12)
- Vitamin C (2000 mg 3x per day)
- A good, all-round antioxidant formula
- Magnesium (500 mg elemental per day)
- Calcium, 1000 mg elemental per day
- Omega 3 (see section above)
- Take low dose aspirin daily (1/4 tablet)

REMEMBER, high blood pressure is not a life sentence. Through exercise, medication and correct eating plan it can be managed!

Disclaimer: The information contained in this document is not intended to replace the attention or advice of a physician or other health care professional. Anyone who wishes to embark on any dietary, drug, exercise, or other lifestyle change that is intended to prevent or treat a specific disease should first consult a qualified health care professional.

