

# **HOW TO REDUCE HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

In 2006 I received an “invitation” from my doctor's surgery to go for a check-up. Probably their computer had flagged-up the fact that I was 50 and hadn't been there in a long while.

The result of the check-up was that I had high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes and high cholesterol. At that time I had no idea what high blood pressure was or how potentially dangerous it could be, so I simply took the medicine I had been prescribed. It was, after all, an easy remedy.

Several months later I read an article on the side-effects of the long-term use of these drugs, so I started doing my own research on how to lower my blood pressure without having to take (or certainly take less of) this prescribed medication.

This report was born out of that research ( I'm still researching!). I hate being told what I must or must not do, so please look upon this report as a suggestion of ways to enable yourself to lower you blood pressure using safe, natural methods.

**Important:** I don't want to get sued! Please check with your doctor before changing your diet, beginning any exercise, or altering the dosage of your prescribed medication in any way.

## **PART ONE**

### **So What Is “Blood Pressure” And What Is “High Blood Pressure”?**

What, first of all, what is blood pressure? Quite simply, blood pressure is the force of your blood against your artery walls. When you have your blood pressure checked you'll here the nurse or doctor say something like “120 over 80”. The reading has two numbers: one on top and one on the bottom. Just as a barometer in your home measures air pressure in millimetres of mercury (mm Hg), blood pressure is also measured in millimetres of mercury.

The top number is known as the systolic pressure. This is the force of your blood in your arteries when your heart beats. The bottom number is known as the diastolic pressure. This is the force of your blood in your arteries when your heart relaxes between beats.

Normal blood pressure would be a reading of 120/80 or lower.

High blood pressure would be a reading of 140/90 or higher.

The range between these two readings i.e. 120/80 to 140/90 is known as “prehypertension”. This is the stage where if nothing is done to reduce the readings, it is likely that you'll develop high blood pressure (hypertension).

## **What Are The Symptoms Of High Blood Pressure?**

This is the big problem as there are usually no symptoms. A person only finds out that they've got high blood pressure when they go to the doctor for some other reason and then have their blood pressure checked. This is why it is so very important to get your blood pressure checked at regular intervals even if you feel perfectly healthy.

*Very* high blood pressure can cause such symptoms as headaches, vomiting, nausea and may sometimes cause the blood vessels in the eyes to bleed or burst. If this happens your vision will be blurred or impaired and might even result in blindness.

## **Why Is High Blood Pressure So Dangerous?**

High blood pressure makes people five times more prone to strokes, three times more likely to have a heart attack, and two to three times more likely to experience heart failure. The problem is that nearly one third of those who have it simply do not know because they never experience any symptoms. Over time that pressure damages the inside surface of your blood vessels, possibly resulting in a weakened blood vessel breaking and bleeding into the brain, leaving you with a stroke.

Along with a stroke or kidney disease high blood pressure can also cause a heart attack. Your arteries bring blood-carrying oxygen to your heart muscle. If your heart is not getting enough oxygen you will experience chest pain. If the blood flow is blocked as well you will experience a heart attack.

Congestive Heart Failure is very common among people with high blood pressure. This is a very serious condition where your heart cannot pump enough blood to supply the needs of your body.

Anyone can develop high blood pressure, even children. Many people will develop high blood pressure as they age, but that doesn't mean it is healthy.

## **What Causes High Blood Pressure?**

In most instances it is usually not known *exactly* what has caused high blood pressure, but there are many things that are known to cause the condition including physical inactivity, tobacco and alcohol use, stress and diet. Certain medical conditions and medications can also cause high blood pressure.

Obesity plays a big role in high blood pressure. If you are overweight you are at a higher risk of having high blood pressure as well as a stroke or heart disease. Try to lose at least ten pounds and this will help lower your blood pressure significantly.

In today's hectic lifestyle stress is all around us. Stress is known to be a factor in causing high blood pressure.

## **PART TWO**

### **What Can Be Done To Lower high Blood Pressure?**

Okay, in part one we got a fair idea of what high blood pressure is, what causes it, what (if any) the symptoms are, and why it is important to get it lowered to normal. Let's take a look at how we can get it sorted out.

#### **Prescription Medication**

It seems that doctors the world over are all too ready to prescribe medication rather than to suggest natural methods of lowering high blood pressure. Of course, these medicines do work, but most, if not all can have undesirable side-effects in the long-term, so it is wise to look for other, more natural methods.

#### **A Healthy Diet**

Eating a healthy diet containing high levels of potassium, magnesium and calcium is a great way to lower and control your blood pressure. Limit your intake of salt and sodium and introduce more fresh fruits and vegetables into your diet.

A healthy diet should include essential fatty acids, but as little as possible saturated fats, salt and sugar.



## Eat Less Salt

The amount of salt (sodium chloride) you consume has a tremendous affect on your blood pressure, and so should be one of the very first things to examine.

Nearly everyone eats too much salt. Cut down on the amount of salt you eat to less than six grams per day. Put less or no salt on your food or when cooking your food. You'll be surprised how quickly your taste buds will adjust to a low- or no-salt diet. If you really can't do without it try a low-sodium substitute.

In fact, most of the salt we consume (about eighty per cent) comes in the form of ready-prepared food. Bread, breakfast cereals, biscuits, ready-meals, smoked meats and fish, soups, ketchups, pickles and sauces are all usually high in salt, so try to get into the habit of checking the labels. If the label doesn't state the salt content then look for the word "sodium", which is one of the chemicals in salt. One gram of sodium is equivalent to 2.5 grams of salt.

If the label says that the contents has 0.25 grams (or less) of salt per 100 grams, then it is safe to eat as much as you like. If the contents contains between 0.25 and 1.25 grams per 100 grams then you can eat small amounts now and then. If the contents has more than 1.25 grams per 100 grams then avoid eating it.

## Some Fats Are Good!

Unsaturated fats can help reduce cholesterol and provide essential fatty acid that the body needs. Fish contain omega-3 which prevents heart disease. Try eating oily fish such as trout, salmon and mackerel. It will be a lot healthier for you if you grill, bake or steam the fish. Do not add salt when cooking. Sardines, too, are a good choice. Fresh fish are best, but if you must buy tinned fish check the label to make sure the salt content is low.

## Some Fats Are Bad!

Saturated fats can over time raise the level of cholesterol in your blood, so increasing the risk of heart disease. Try to avoid foods such as:

- fatty cuts of meat
- meat products like pies and sausages
- lard, ghee and butter
- ice cream, soured cream, cream
- cheese (especially hard cheese)
- pastries, cakes and biscuits
- coconut oil, coconut cream and palm oil

As with salt you need to check the label:

More than 5 grams of saturated fat per 100 grams is HIGH

Less than 1.5 grams of saturated fat per 100 grams is LOW

Chose a white meat such as chicken or turkey over red meat. Grill the meat instead of frying and remove the skin.

## Eat Plenty Of Fruit And Vegetables

Fruit and vegetables are full of fiber, minerals and vitamins essential for keeping the body healthy. They contain potassium which counteracts the effect of salt.

Try to eat at least five portions (a portion is about 80 grams) of different fruits and vegetables per day. If you buy tinned, frozen or dried produce check the label for added salt or sugar.

Don't add salt to vegetables (or sugar to fruit) during cooking or at the table. Steam or bake vegetables to keep their minerals and vitamins as intact as possible, and try not to over-cook them. If you do boil them use as little water as possible.

Remember that most vegetables can be cooked very quickly and healthily in a microwave oven, just as you would “bake” a potato.

Onions are really delicious cooked this way, remember to give them a good stabbing with a sharp knife before cooking for a few minutes or they'll “pop out” like a telescope.

Carrots are another great example. They can take ages to cook in boiling water or by steaming, but in a microwave you can cook a whole carrot in a few minutes. Just place it in a suitable container with a small amount of water.

Give it a try. Because the cooking time is short and very little water is used vegetables retain much more of their nutrients.

## Some Food And Drinks To Include In Your Diet

### Tomatoes

Tomatoes are rich in calcium and potassium and contain vitamins A, C and E. Tomatoes also contain lycopene which is a powerful antioxidant that is reputed to lower the risk of heart disease. The antioxidants found in tomatoes can prevent LDL (bad) cholesterol from oxidizing and sticking to the blood vessel walls, which would raise blood pressure.

Drinking tomato juice is a great way to enjoy tomatoes. If you own a juicer, make your own. If you have to buy tomato juice make sure it's a pure juice with no added salt or sugar. Strangely, it seems that processed tomatoes such as canned is more beneficial than fresh!

### Broccoli

Broccoli is full of nutrition. Not only is it high in potassium but it contains chromium that helps regulate blood sugar and insulin. Don't over cook it. Place it in a pan with just enough water to cover it, that way it will retain more nutrients. Better still, steam it. When I'm preparing broccoli I always cut off a few florets and eat them raw. Try it, they're delicious!

## Spinach

Spinach is rich in magnesium and helps prevent heart disease. It also contains folate which protects the body from homocysteine, an excessive amount of which can cause heart attacks and strokes. Cook for as little time as possible. Better still, eat raw in salads.

## Sunflower Seeds

Sunflower seeds are rich in potassium, magnesium and phytosterols which can aid in the reduction of your cholesterol level. (High levels of cholesterol can cause narrowing of the arteries and blood vessels which raises blood pressure).

## Bananas

Bananas are rich in potassium and have a high fiber content. Try to eat at least two bananas per day.

## Garlic

Garlic helps thin the blood and stops blood vessels clogging, so reducing blood pressure. Try chewing a clove or two of garlic each day. If you don't want to lose all your friends you may prefer to take it in the form of a supplement.

## Hawthorn

Hawthorn dilates the arteries and improves the flow of blood, so lowering blood pressure. Use a mixture of leaves and flowers to make a tea. Place two teaspoonfuls in a cup and add boiling water. Leave to infuse for around twenty minutes before straining. Drink two or three cups of the elixir per day.

## Drink Plenty Of Water

Yes, I'm quite serious. Drinking water at regular intervals throughout the the day prevents the body becoming dehydrated. When the body is low on water the brain reacts by constricting the veins and arteries, so causing an increase in blood pressure.

Remember: drink plenty of water, not alcohol, coffee, or soft drinks that contain sugar as these drinks actually cause dehydration.

## **YOUR HEART AND EXERCISE**

Exercise stimulates the development of new connections between the impaired and the nearly-normal blood vessels, so people who exercise have a more efficient blood supply to all the muscle tissue of the heart.

A heart attack is a condition in which the myocardium (the heart muscle) does not get enough oxygen and other nutrients and so begins to die.

It has been observed that exercise can lower high blood pressure by stimulating the development of these life saving detours in the heart. One study further showed that moderate exercise several times a week is more effective in building up these auxiliary pathways than extremely vigorous exercise done twice as often.

If you are able, start taking some exercise today. Regular exercise makes the blood vessels more flexible and the heart stronger so it is able to pump blood around the body more efficiently. It also makes it easier to achieve a healthier weight if you are overweight.

## So What Exercises Are Good?

(To be on the safe side it is wise to ask your doctor about taking exercise if you are suffering from high blood pressure or if you are overweight).

The type of exercise you need is aerobic (cardiovascular) exercise. The type of exercise to avoid is that which will develop muscle. Walking is a tremendous way to begin your exercise program.

Take it slowly. Begin at a low, comfortable level of exertion and progress gradually as your stamina increases.

Your goal should be about thirty minutes per day. You can start off by doing three ten-minute sessions, or two fifteen-minute sessions. Exercise at least three and a maximum of five days a week. You should walk at a brisk pace so that you feel quite warm and slightly out of breath.

The sort of exercise that is good for your blood pressure is: cycling, dancing, swimming, tennis, jogging, walking.

The type of exercise that is not good for your blood pressure is: weight lifting, squash, sprinting.



## **Stress Management Is Important**

Stress is the underlying cause of many illnesses, both major and minor. Physicians and mental health experts agree that stress reduction techniques can prevent many illnesses, and disorders, as well as increase a person's ability to heal following the development of a variety of health problems.

The human response to stress is triggered within the brain, producing chemical and physical changes throughout the body, which affect every aspect of it's functioning.

During times of intense stress the brain's production of such chemicals as Dopamine, Epinephrine, and Norepinephrine increase, causing the distribution of larger amounts of these Catecholamines throughout the body.

The increase of the presence of these chemicals produces physiological changes such as increased heart rate, and blood pressure, increased cell reproduction, and suppression of the immune system.

Over time, unmanaged stress can lead to the development of ulcers and other digestive problems, heart disease, even heart attack and stroke.

The immune's systems ability to fight off infection and disease is inhibited, allowing for the onset of various illnesses and viral

infections. Additionally, the development of chronic conditions such as Diabetes and Asthma, have been linked to stress.

Stress is also related to many mental and emotional disorders, such as Depression, Anxiety, extreme Phobias, and panic attacks. The “Fight or Flight” instinct triggered by the brain during times of extreme stress is also related to the on-set of these chronic mental health conditions.

Learning to manage stress in healthy ways can help reduce the chemical changes occurring within the brain and body, thereby improving both physical and mental health.

## **Some Relaxation Techniques For Stress Management**

The unhealthy affects of stress can be seen in physical as well as mental and emotional health problems. Besides heart and digestive problems, stress can contribute to overall muscle aches, stiffness and even pain.

Relaxation techniques can help manage the affects of stress on the body as well as the mind. There are various techniques you can use to experience a state of relaxation and calmness, which require little time or effort.

There are, of course, countless ways to help ease the stress of modern life. Here is one relaxation technique that many people have found beneficial, and you can start using today:

### **The “Stair Step” Relaxation Technique**

Begin with a series of deep, cleansing breaths. Feel your body relax, as you slowly breath in and out. It can be helpful to imagine the tension and stress leaving your body as you exhale, while peace and calm fill you, as you inhale clean, fresh air.

Once you have done this for a period of two to three minutes, begin to experience the tension leaving your muscles, one at a time.

Once you are ready, picture yourself at the top of a flight of 10 stairs. Take one step down this set of stairs, and imagine that your body, your mind, and your spirit feel more relaxed, and more at ease as you reach this step. Say the number “One” as you descend.

With each succeeding step you can experience a deeper and deeper state of calm and relaxation. As you descend upon each step say the corresponding number of the step you are on.

When you reach 10, which is at the bottom of this set of steps, you will be entirely calm and relaxed. Any problems or worries you had will have vanished, and you will feel totally at peace.

Once you have experienced this state for a moment or two, you will be ready to come back up the set of stairs. With each step that you climb, you will become a little more awake and alert to your surroundings.

Your body and mind will remain at calm and at peace even after you return to the final step. You will feel renewed energy, and a renewed sense of purpose and joy, as you return to the top of the stairs.