

27 Healthy Habits to Relieve Blood Pressure



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Introduction

Hypertension, or high blood pressure, is a very common and serious condition that can lead to or complicate many health problems. The risk of cardiovascular morbidity and mortality is directly correlated with blood pressure. Risks of stroke, MI, angina, heart failure, kidney failure or early death from a cardiovascular cause are directly correlated with BP.

Thankfully, high blood pressure is treatable and taking preventative measures to control your blood pressure is the best way to protect your health. After all, prevention is better than cure and there is a lot that you can do to prevent and control your blood pressure. In most cases, lifestyle changes are completely effective in controlling blood pressure.

The ultimate goal of this guide is for you to gain a solid understanding of healthy habits that have been proven to control blood pressure. This is presented to you in clear language allowing and empowering you take complete control of your health.

Congratulations on taking this first step to a better and healthier life!

What is Hypertension?

High blood pressure or hypertension, often referred to as the ‘silent killer’, is typically asymptomatic meaning no symptoms are shown. Some people with high blood pressure will experience symptoms, including chest pain, dizziness, headaches, shortness of breath, palpitations, and heart and nose bleeds. Most people, however, will experience no symptoms at all until the damage has been done which is often after several years of living with high blood pressure. The first step to preventing and managing high blood pressure is to understand high blood pressure, its causes, effects, and long-term consequences. All of this will be covered in this section. If you already have high blood pressure, it is important to control and continuously monitor your blood pressure

How is Blood Pressure Measured?

Each time your heart beats, it pumps blood into your arteries. A blood pressure measurement is a test that measures the force (pressure) in your arteries as your heart pumps. Blood pressure is measured as two numbers:

Systolic blood pressure (the first and higher number) measures pressure inside your arteries when the heart beats.

Diastolic blood pressure (the second and lower number) measures the pressure inside the artery when the heart rests between beats.

High blood pressure, also known as hypertension, affects tens of millions of adults in the United States. It increases the risk of life-threatening conditions including heart attack and stroke. But high blood pressure rarely causes symptoms. A blood pressure measurement helps diagnose high blood pressure early, so it may be treated before it leads to serious complications

The guidelines used to diagnose high blood pressure may differ from health care professional to health care professional:

Some health care professionals diagnose patients with high blood pressure if their blood pressure is consistently 140/90 mm Hg or higher. This limit is based on a guideline released in 2003, as seen in the table below.

Other health care professionals diagnose patients with high blood pressure if their blood pressure is consistently 130/80 mm Hg or higher.

Signs and Symptoms

Most people with high blood pressure will not experience any symptoms, which is why people often call hypertension the “silent killer.”

However, once blood pressure reaches about 180/120 mm Hg, it becomes a hypertensive crisis, which constitutes a medical emergency.

At this stage, a person may have:

- a headache
- nausea
- vomiting
- dizziness
- blurred or double vision
- nosebleeds
- heart palpitations
- breathlessness

Who Is At Risk For High Blood Pressure?

Anyone can develop high blood pressure, but there are certain factors that can increase your risk:

Age - Blood pressure tends to rise with age

Race/Ethnicity - High blood pressure is more common in African American adults

Weight - People who are overweight or have obesity are more likely to develop high blood pressure

Sex - Before age 55, men are more likely than women to develop high blood pressure. After age 55, women are more likely than men to develop it.

Lifestyle - Certain lifestyle habits can raise your risk for high blood pressure, such as eating too much sodium (salt) or not enough potassium, lack of exercise, drinking too much alcohol, and smoking.

Family history - A family history of high blood pressure raises the risk of developing high blood pressure

27 Effective Ways to Lower Your Blood

1. Increase Activity and Exercise More

As you regularly increase your heart and breathing rates, over time your heart gets stronger and pumps with less effort. This puts less pressure on your arteries and lowers your blood pressure.

How much activity should you strive for?

A 2019 report by the American College of Cardiology and the American Heart Association advises moderate- to vigorous-intensity physical activity for 40-minute sessions, three to four times per week.

If finding 40 minutes at a time is a challenge, there may still be benefits when the time is divided into three or four 10- to 15-minute segments throughout the day. The American College of Sports Medicine makes similar recommendations. But you don't have to run marathons. Increasing your activity level can be as simple as:

- using the stairs
- walking instead of driving
- doing household chores
- gardening
- going for a bike ride
- playing a team sport

The above list, of course, is not exhaustive. But hopefully it provides sufficient

2. Lose Weight

Overweight is an increasingly prevalent condition throughout the world. Current estimates, which are probably conservative, indicate that at least 500 000 000 people worldwide are overweight as defined by a body mass index (BMI) of between 25.0 and 29.9 and an additional 250 000 000 are obese with a BMI of 30.0 or higher. In the United States, recent data indicate that as much as 66% of the adult population is overweight or obese.²

Overweight and obesity are established risk factors for cardiovascular disease (CVD), stroke, noninsulin dependent diabetes (NIDDM), certain cancers, and numerous other disorders. It is also a risk factor for hypertension.

If you're overweight, losing 5 to 10 pounds can reduce your blood pressure. Plus, you'll lower your risk of other potential medical problems.

A review of several studies reports that weight loss diets reduced blood pressure by an average of 3.2 mm Hg diastolic and 4.5 mm Hg systolic.

3. Cut Back On Sugar and Refined Carbohydrates

Many studies show that restricting sugar and refined carbohydrates can help you lose weight and lower your blood pressure.

Sugar, especially fructose, may increase your blood pressure more than salt, according to one 2014 review. In trials lasting at least 8 weeks, sugar increased blood pressure by 5.6 mm Hg diastolic and 6.9 mm Hg systolic.

A 2020 study that compared various popular diets found that for people who with more weight or obesity, low carb and low fat diets lowered their diastolic blood pressure by an average of about 5 mm Hg and their systolic blood pressure 3 mm Hg after 6 months.

Another benefit of a low carb, low sugar diet is that you feel fuller longer, because you're consuming more protein and fat.

4. Eat More Potassium and Less Sodium

Increasing your potassium intake and cutting back on salt can also lower your blood pressure.

Potassium is a double winner: It lessens the effects of salt in your system and eases tension in your blood vessels. However, diets rich in potassium may be harmful to people with kidney disease, so talk with your doctor before increasing your potassium intake.

It's easy to eat more potassium. So many foods are naturally high in potassium. Here are a few:

low fat dairy foods, such as milk and yogurt

fish

fruits, such as bananas, apricots, avocados, and oranges

vegetables, such as sweet potatoes, potatoes, tomatoes, greens, and spinach

Note that people respond to salt differently. Some people are salt-sensitive, meaning that a higher salt intake increases their blood pressure. Others are salt-insensitive. They can have a high salt intake and excrete it in their urine without raising their blood pressure.

The National Institutes of Health recommends reducing salt intake using the DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) diet. The DASH diet emphasizes:

- low sodium foods
- fruits and vegetables
- low fat dairy
- whole grains
- fish
- poultry
- beans
- fewer sweets and red meats

5. Eat Less Processed Food

Most of the extra salt in your diet comes from processed foods and foods from restaurants, not your salt shaker at home. Popular high salt items include:

- deli meats
- canned soup
- pizza
- chips

other processed snacks

Foods labeled “low fat” is usually high in salt and sugar to compensate for the loss of fat. Fat is what gives food taste and makes you feel full.

Cutting down on or even better, cutting out processed food will help you eat less salt, less sugar, and fewer refined carbohydrates. All of this can result in lower blood pressure.

Make it a practice to check nutrition labels. According to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), a sodium listing of 5 percent or less on a food label is considered low, while 20 percent or more is considered high.

6. Stop Smoking

It can be difficult to do, but it's worth it: Stopping smoking is good for your all-around health. Smoking causes an immediate but temporary increase in your blood pressure and an increase in your heart rate.

In the long term, the chemicals in tobacco can increase your blood pressure by damaging your blood vessel walls, causing inflammation, and narrowing your arteries. The hardened arteries cause higher blood pressure.

The chemicals in tobacco can affect your blood vessels even if you're around secondhand smoke.

A study showed that nonsmokers who were able to go to smoke-free restaurants, bars, and workplaces had lower blood pressure than nonsmokers in areas that had no smoke-free policies affecting public places.

7. Reduce Excess Stress

We live in stressful times. Workplace and family demands, national and international politics they all contribute to stress. Finding ways to reduce your own stress is important for your health and your blood pressure.

There are lots of ways to successfully relieve stress, so find what works for you. Practice deep breathing, take a walk, read a book, or watch a comedy.

Listening to music daily has also been shown to reduce systolic blood pressure.

A 20-year study showed that regular sauna use reduced death from heart-related events.

And one small 2015 study has shown that acupuncture can lower both systolic and diastolic blood pressure.

8. Try Meditation or Yoga

Mindfulness and meditation, including transcendental meditation, have long been used and studied as methods to reduce stress.

Yoga, which commonly involves breathing control, posture, and meditation techniques, can also be effective in reducing stress and blood pressure.

A 2013 review on yoga and blood pressure found an average blood pressure decrease of 3.62 mm Hg diastolic and 4.17 mm Hg systolic when compared with those who didn't exercise.

Studies of yoga practices that included breath control, postures, and meditation were nearly twice as effective as yoga practices that didn't include all three of these elements.

9. Eat Some Dark Chocolate

Yes, chocolate lovers, dark chocolates has been shown to lower blood pressure.

But the dark chocolate should be 60 to 70 percent cacao. A review of studies on dark chocolate has found that eating one to two squares of dark chocolate per day may help lower the risk of heart disease by lowering blood pressure and inflammation.

The benefits are thought to come from the flavonoids present in chocolate with more cocoa solids. The flavonoids help dilate, or widen, your blood vessels.

10. Try Medicinal Herbs

Herbal medicines have long been used in many cultures to treat a variety of ailments. Some herbs have even been shown to possibly lower blood pressure. However, more research is needed to identify the doses and components in the herbs that are most useful.

Always check with your doctor or pharmacist before taking herbal supplements. They may interfere with your prescription medications.

Here's a partial list of plants and herbs that are used by cultures throughout the world to lower blood pressure:

- black bean (*Castanospermum australe*)
- cat's claw (*Uncaria rhynchophylla*)
- celery juice (*Apium graveolens*)
- Chinese hawthorn (*Crataegus pinnatifida*)
- ginger root
- giant dodder (*Cuscuta reflexa*)
- Indian plantago (blond psyllium)
- maritime pine bark (*Pinus pinaster*)
- river lily (*Crinum glaucum*)
- roselle (*Hibiscus sabdariffa*)
- sesame oil (*Sesamum indicum*)
- tomato extract (*Lycopersicon esculentum*)
- tea (*Camellia sinensis*), especially green tea and oolong tea
- umbrella tree bark (*Musanga cecropioides*)

11. Eat Berries

Berries are full of more than just juicy flavor.

They're also packed with polyphenols, natural plant compounds that are good for your heart. Polyphenols can reduce the risk of stroke, heart conditions, and diabetes, as well as improving blood pressure, insulin resistance, and systemic inflammation.

One study assigned people with high blood pressure to a low-polyphenol diet or a high-polyphenol diet containing berries, chocolate, fruits, and vegetables .

Those consuming berries and polyphenol-rich foods experienced improved markers of heart disease risk.

Berries are rich in polyphenols, which can help lower blood pressure and the overall risk of heart disease.

12. Eat Garlic or Take Garlic Extract

Fresh garlic or garlic extract are both widely used to lower blood pressure.

A meta-analysis found that for people with high blood pressure, garlic supplements reduced their systolic blood pressure by up to about 5 mm Hg and reduced their diastolic blood pressure as much as 2.5 mm Hg.

According to a 2009 clinical study, a time-release garlic extract preparation may have a greater effect on blood pressure than regular garlic powder tablets.

13. Eat Healthy High Protein Foods

A long-term study concluded in 2014 found that people who ate more protein had a lower risk of high blood pressure. For those who ate an average of 100 grams of protein per day, there was a 40 percent lower risk of having high blood pressure than those on a low protein diet.

Those who also added regular fiber into their diet saw up to a 60 percent reduction of risk.

However, a high protein diet may not be for everyone. Those with kidney disease may need to use caution. It's best to talk with your doctor.

It's fairly easy to consume 100 grams of protein daily on most types of diets.

- High protein foods include:
- fish, such as salmon or canned tuna in water
- eggs
- poultry, such as chicken breast
- beef
- beans and legumes, such as kidney beans and lentils
- nuts or nut butter, such as peanut butter
- chickpeas
- cheese, such as cheddar

A 3.5-ounce serving of salmon can have as much as 22 grams of protein, while a 3.5-ounce serving of chicken breast might contain 30 grams of protein.

With regard to vegetarian options, a half-cup serving of most types of beans contains 7 to 10 grams of protein. Two tablespoons of peanut butter would provide 8 grams.

14. Take BP lowering Supplements

These supplements are readily available and have demonstrated promise for lowering blood pressure:

Omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acid

Adding omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids or fish oil to your diet can have many benefits.

A meta-analysis of fish oil and blood pressure found a mean blood pressure reduction in those with high blood pressure of 4.5 mm Hg systolic and 3.0 mm Hg diastolic.

Whey protein

This protein complex derived from milk may have several health benefits in addition to possibly lowering blood pressure.

Magnesium

Magnesium deficiency is related to higher blood pressure. A meta-analysis found a small reduction in blood pressure with magnesium supplementation.

Citrulline

Oral L-citrulline is a precursor to L-arginine in the body, a building block of protein, which may lower blood pressure.

15. Drink less Alcohol

Alcohol can raise your blood pressure, even if you're healthy.

It's important to drink in moderation. According to a 2006 study, alcohol can raise your blood pressure by 1 mm Hg for each 10 grams of alcohol consumed. A standard drink contains 14 grams of alcohol.

What constitutes a standard drink? One 12-ounce beer, 5 ounces of wine, or 1.5 ounces of distilled spirits.

Moderate drinking is up to one drink a day for women and up to two drinks per day for men.

A review found that although drinking more than 30 grams of alcohol may initially lower blood pressure, after 13 hours or more, systolic blood pressure increased by 3.7 mm HG and diastolic blood pressure increased by 2.4 mm Hg.

16. Consider Cutting Back On Caffeine

Caffeine raises your blood pressure, but the effect is temporary.

In a 2017 study, the systolic blood pressure of 18 participants was elevated for 2 hours after they drank 32 ounces of either a caffeinated drink or an energy drink. Blood pressure then dropped more quickly for the participants who drank a caffeinated drink.

Some people may be more sensitive to caffeine than others. If you're caffeine-sensitive, you may want to cut back on your coffee consumption, or try decaffeinated coffee.

Research on caffeine, including its health benefits, is in the news a lot. The choice of whether to cut back depends on many individual factors.

One older study indicated that caffeine's effect on raising blood pressure is greater if your blood pressure is already high. This same study, however, called for more research on the subject.

17. Take Prescription Medication

If your blood pressure is very high or doesn't decrease after making these lifestyle changes, your doctor may recommend prescription drugs.

They work and will improve your long-term outcome, especially if you have other risk factors. However, it can take some time to find the right combination of medications.

Talk with your doctor about possible medications and what might work best for you.

18. Walking Your Way to a Healthy Heart

Do not worry if you can't run, don't like running or prefer starting with moderate exercises. A study by the Life Sciences Division, conducted at the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory in Berkeley, California, has shown that moderate walking lowers your risk of developing high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and diabetes mellitus just as much as running. The same energy used for moderate and vigorous exercise produces similar reductions. Therefore, the more you walk or run every week, the greater the health benefits.

These findings are consistent with the recommendation of the American Heart Association which recommends at least 30 minutes of exercise per day. So to reap health benefits from exercising, you should engage in at least 150 minutes of moderate activity or 75 minutes of vigorous exercise per week.

Remember that 30 minutes of physical activity per day should be the minimum.

19. Eat Calcium Rich Foods

Calcium helps in the contraction and relaxation of blood vessels which further helps in lowering high blood pressure. When talking about a healthy diet to manage high blood pressure, we cannot afford to miss the nutrient calcium. People who suffer from calcium deficiencies are at a higher risk of high blood pressure.

Calcium is crucial for the release of hormones and enzymes we need for most body functions to perform smoothly. Calcium helps in the contraction and relaxation of blood vessels which further helps in lowering high blood pressure.

Incorporate these calcium-rich foods in your diet to lower your blood pressure:

- Tofu
- Cheese
- Almonds
- Milk
- Figs
- Chia seeds
- Yoghurt
- Green leafy vegetables

20. Eat Foods Rich in Magnesium

Magnesium is a mineral that's critical for many bodily functions, including blood pressure regulation

Studies show that magnesium supplements may help reduce blood pressure by increasing the production of nitric oxide a signaling molecule that helps relax blood vessels.

A review of 11 randomized studies found that magnesium, taken at 365–450 mg per day over an average of 3.6 months, significantly reduced blood pressure in people with chronic medical conditions.

Another review of 10 studies in over 200,000 people suggested that greater dietary intake of magnesium may protect against high blood pressure in the first place. Every 100-mg daily increase in dietary magnesium was linked to a 5% reduction in high blood pressure risk.

21. Drink More Water

It's important to stay hydrated for your overall health. There is a link between dehydration and blood pressure. When the body is properly hydrated, the heart is able to pump effectively so blood can move easily throughout the body, although more studies need to be conducted on this matter.

When the body is dehydrated, the heart must use more force and pump harder to distribute blood throughout the body. It takes more effort for the blood to get to the tissues and organs. Dehydration results in a lower blood volume which causes the heart rate and blood pressure to increase.

In general, it's recommended to drink eight 8-ounce cups of water a day. It's important to note that some foods, like fruits and vegetables, also contain water. More specific guidelines include:

- **For women:** Approximately 11 cups (2.7 liters or about 91 ounces) daily fluid intake (this includes all beverages and foods that contain water).
- **For men:** Approximately 15.5 cups (3.7 liters or about 125 ounces) total daily fluid intake (includes all beverages and foods that contain water).

22. Get enough sleep

Sleep experts recommend that adults should get seven to eight hours of a sleep each night. Getting less than six hours of sleep is known to be bad for your overall health. Stress, jet lag, shift work and other sleep disturbances make you more likely to develop heart disease and risk factors for heart disease, including obesity and diabetes. A regular lack of sleep may lead to high blood pressure (hypertension) in both children and adults.

The less you sleep, the higher your blood pressure may go. People who sleep six hours or less may have steeper increases in blood pressure. If you already have high blood pressure, not sleeping well may make your blood pressure worse.

It's thought that sleep helps your body control hormones needed to regulate stress and metabolism. Over time, a lack of sleep could cause swings in hormones, leading to high blood pressure and other risk factors for heart disease.

Don't try to make up for a lack of sleep with a lot of sleep. Too much sleep, to a lesser degree than short sleep, can lead to high blood sugar and weight gain, which are bad for your heart health. Talk to your doctor for tips on getting better sleep, especially if you have high blood pressure.

23. Avoid Drugs and Supplements That Can Raise BP

Just as there are drugs that have a blood-pressure-lowering effects, there are also drugs that can contribute to high blood pressure.

Pain Medications, NSAIDs, both prescription and over-the-counter versions, can elevate blood pressure by making your body retain fluid, thereby decreasing the function of your kidneys.

Common used NSAIDs that raise blood pressure include:

- Ibuprofen (e.g. Advil)
- Naproxen (Anaprox, Aleve).

Other pain medications which can cause blood pressure to rise include:

- Indomethacin (e.g. Indocin)
- Piroxicam (Feldene).

24. Always Read Labels When Buying Food

If you have been told that your blood pressure is high or borderline high, your doctor would have probably told you to avoid salty foods, start getting more physically active or to lose some weight if you are overweight.

It's important understand the food labels so you can gauge how much sodium (along with calories and other nutrients) you are consuming from these packaged foods.

25. Use Probiotics

The study found that regular intake of probiotics, such as those found in certain yogurts or supplements, may help ease the condition.

Researchers looked at data from nine studies that examined links between probiotics and blood pressure. The studies involved a total of 543 adults with either normal or elevated blood pressure.

People who consumed probiotics had an average reduction in systolic blood pressure (the top number in a reading) of about 3.6 millimeters of mercury (mm Hg) and an average reduction in diastolic blood pressure (the bottom number) of about 2.4 mm Hg, compared to those who did not consume probiotics.

Probiotics' benefits seemed greatest among people with elevated blood pressure (higher than 130/85), and probiotics with multiple types of bacteria lowered blood pressure more than those with a single type of bacteria, the researchers reported.

The study was published July 21 in the journal *Hypertension*.

Duration of intake seemed key -- people who consumed probiotics for less than two months did not see reductions in blood pressure readings, the study authors noted.

26. Always Monitor Blood Pressure at Home

Many people monitor their blood pressure at home. They often do this to manage or treat a certain health condition. If you monitor your blood pressure at home, keep a record, or log, of the measurements. The record shows your doctor how your blood pressure changes throughout the day. If you take medicines to control your blood pressure, it will help document if they are working. Measuring your blood pressure at home is a good way to take part in managing your health.

Tips for measuring your blood pressure at home:

- Measure your blood pressure in both arms when you first start. They will give slightly different readings. From then on, use the arm that gave you the higher reading each time.
- Always use the same arm. If possible, use the arm that your doctor or nurse uses when they measure your blood pressure.
- Take readings at the same time each day. For example, first thing in the morning or last thing at night.
- Don't round your measurements up or down. Record your readings as they're displayed because it could affect the treatment you're prescribed.
- Don't worry if you get an unexpected high reading. A one-off high reading is usually nothing to worry about, rest for five minutes and take the reading again. If it's still high, measure your blood pressure again another day. If it remains high for long, around two or three weeks, see your doctor or nurse.
- Don't worry about small changes. It's normal for there to be small changes in your blood pressure.
- Don't check your blood pressure too often. Some people find that they become worried or stressed about small changes in their readings if they take them too often. Worrying can also raise your blood pressure in the short term, making your reading higher than it should be.

27 Watch Your Waistline

A larger waistline can put you at a greater risk of heart disease. Generally speaking, to reduce their risk, men should aim to keep their waistline under 40 inches. Women should try for less than 35 inches.

Certain herbs and spices contain powerful compounds that may help reduce blood pressure by helping blood vessels relax.

Celery seed, cilantro, saffron, lemongrass, black cumin, ginseng, cinnamon, cardamom, sweet basil, and ginger are just some of the herbs and spices that have been shown to have blood-pressure-lowering potential, according to results from animal and human research.

Conclusion

There's no safe and effective way to quickly lower high blood pressure at home. The best way to lower high blood pressure is to make changes over days to weeks, so that the body can adapt to the change. If your blood pressure is dangerously high and needs to be lowered quickly, it must be done in a healthcare setting.

Remember: When lowering your blood pressure at home, it's important to include your doctor in the process. Talk to your healthcare provider about natural ways you can lower your blood pressure over time, like improving your diet and increasing your physical activity. Recommendations for diet and physical activity can vary from person to person. So it's important to talk with your doctor about the ways you're lowering your blood pressure to make sure they're safe for you.