

How to lower your blood pressure

High blood pressure has no warning signs or symptoms — but it's one health issue you can prevent or treat, as long as you know you have it. Have your blood pressure checked regularly!

If you do have high blood pressure, you can often control or lower it through the following lifestyle changes:



LOSE EXTRA POUNDS

Losing just 10 pounds can help reduce your blood pressure. And watch your waistline. Carrying too much weight around your waist can put you at greater risk of high blood pressure.



EXERCISE REGULARLY

All types of exercise can help lower blood pressure — walking, running, cycling, dancing, swimming, even lifting weights. Aim for at least 30 min a day!



EAT A HEALTHY DIET

Research the DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) diet, which is a popular eating plan including whole grains, fruits and vegetables.



REDUCE SODIUM IN YOUR DIET

Even a small reduction in the sodium in your diet can reduce blood pressure. Limit sodium to less than one teaspoon of salt a day (2,300 milligrams).



LIMIT ALCOHOL

In small amounts, alcohol can potentially lower your blood pressure. But that protective effect is lost if you drink too much — generally more than one drink a day for women and for men 65+, and no more than two drinks a day for men under 65.



QUIT SMOKING

Each cigarette increases blood pressure for many minutes after you finish. Quitting smoking helps your blood pressure return to normal. People who quit smoking, regardless of age, have substantial increases in life expectancy.



REDUCE YOUR STRESS

Chronic stress can make you more likely to overeat and skip exercise, which puts you at risk for high blood pressure. Try meditation, yoga or schedule some "you time."



MONITOR YOUR BLOOD PRESSURE

Blood pressure monitors are available widely and without a prescription. Talk to your doctor about home monitoring before you get started.



GET SUPPORT

Supportive family and friends can help encourage you to take better care of yourself, drive you to the doctor's office or embark on an exercise program with you to keep your blood pressure low.

This information is meant to be educational. It should not be interpreted as medical advice. Please talk to your doctor about changes that may affect your health.

Sources: National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute website: Your Guide to Lowering Blood Pressure (accessed January 2013); nhbli.nih.gov. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website: High Blood Pressure Prevention: What You Can Do (accessed January 2013); cdc.gov. American Heart Association website: Understanding Your Risk for High Blood Pressure (accessed January 2013); heart.org. Mayo Clinic website: 10 Ways to Control High Blood Pressure Without Medication, (accessed October 2015), mayoclinic.org.

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