

How Is High Blood Pressure Lowered Without Medicine?

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Overview of Hypertension

Over 65 million adults have been diagnosed with hypertension (high blood pressure), with another 59 million as "pre-hypertensive" or having blood pressure levels that are above normal. While there are a number of reasons why someone might develop high blood pressure, genetic predisposition and lifestyle are usually at fault.

High blood pressure is defined as having a "systolic" blood pressure over 140 and a "diastolic" pressure over 90. It is called the "silent killer" because you can have hypertension for years before being diagnosed with it.

Physicians diagnose patients with either "essential" or "secondary" hypertension. Essential hypertension is responsible for 95 percent of those with high blood pressure and is often associated with a lifestyle choices like high sodium diets and obesity. Secondary hypertension is typically caused by major organ failures.

Uncontrolled hypertension exerts increased pressure against the inside of the arterial walls, accelerating "atherosclerosis" or the build-up of plaque that lines the arteries. It can damage organs like the liver and kidneys and can lead to congestive heart failure, heart attack and stroke.

High blood pressure is often associated with other conditions such as diabetes, obesity, advancing age and a sedentary lifestyle. The bad news is that high blood pressure can have dire [health](#) results. The good news is that it can be managed with lifestyle changes.

Identifying Risks for High Blood Pressure

There are a number of risks that you can manage that can safely lower your blood pressure. These include cigarette smoking, obesity, sedentary lifestyle, diet, sodium, alcohol and caffeine intake and emotional stress. Many of the risks go hand in hand with unhealthy lifestyles and can be treated together. Others require a more concentrated effort, requiring professional help.

Lowering Blood Pressure Without Medicine

If you're interested in avoiding medication, you may be able to lower your blood pressure by making modest changes in your lifestyle. If you smoke cigarettes, stop. Cigarettes contain hundreds of toxic chemicals, including nicotine and carbon monoxide. They have been proven to constrict the blood vessels and elevate the heart rate---both lead to high blood pressure.

Reducing weight (specifically your percentage of body fat) helps to lower blood pressure by taking stress off of the cardiovascular system. In people who are obese, the heart has to work harder, forcing the blood out at higher pressures to supply blood to the other organs.

Getting more [exercise](#) can lower blood pressure by making the heart more

efficient in pumping blood to the body. Exercise typically lowers the percentage of body fat, so it has two benefits to lowering blood pressure.

Eating a low-fat, low cholesterol diet, emphasizing fruit, vegetables and fiber can also help to lower blood pressure by reducing the caloric content and cholesterol. Both are associated with elevated blood pressure.

Another easy way to lower blood pressure is by reducing or eliminating sodium, alcohol and caffeine from your diet. While everyone is not considered "sodium sensitive," for those who are, sodium can cause fluid retention, resulting in higher blood pressure. Reduce your daily sodium intake to 1800 to 2400 grams. Be aware of "hidden sodium" in potato chips and cheese.

Alcohol is considered a "diuretic" and has the reverse effect of sodium. Try limiting your alcohol intake to 2 or less [drinks](#) per day. A drink is one can of beer, one glass of wine or one shot of distilled liquor.

Finally, take steps to lower your emotional stress levels during the day by practicing time management techniques or by using meditation or stress reduction exercises or biofeedback.

Resources

- [American Heart Association](#)