

Cooking Up Lower Blood Pressure

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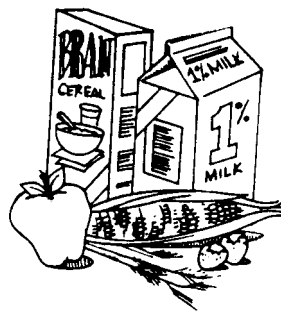
High blood pressure can sneak up on you. Most people who have high blood pressure do not feel sick. But if high blood pressure is not lowered, it can lead to a heart attack or a stroke. It also can damage the kidneys and the eyes. That is why it is important to get your blood pressure checked at least once a year and to keep it in the healthy range.

**Blood pressure
above 140 over
90 is too high.**

Blood pressure is given as two numbers. A reading above 140 over 90 is too high. A healthy level often can be reached without taking medicine. See the “recipe” for lower blood pressure in the box below. If you do not have high blood pressure, these guidelines can help you prevent it.

Recipe for Lower Blood Pressure

- Eat 8–10 servings of fruits and vegetables each day.
- Eat 7–8 servings of grains each day. Choose whole grains often.
- Eat 2–3 servings of foods high in calcium, such as low-fat dairy products, each day.
- Keep your diet moderate in fat.
- If you are overweight, losing just 10 pounds can help lower your blood pressure.
- Get some physical activity each day. Aim for 30 minutes, or 10 minutes three times a day.
- Cut back on processed foods and other foods high in sodium.
- Limit alcohol.



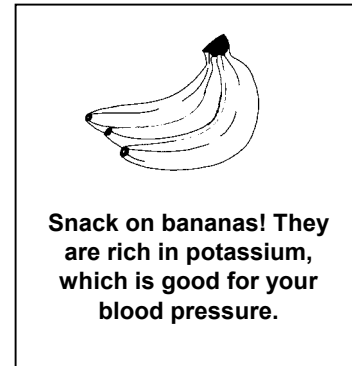
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THE MAIN INGREDIENT: FRUITS, VEGGIES, AND GRAINS

Chances are the servings of fruits, vegetables, and grains listed above may be more than you are used to eating. If so, increase these foods in your diet one serving at a time.

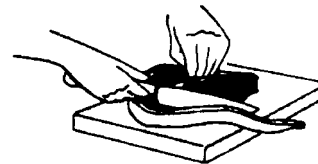
- Add another serving of a fruit or a vegetable.
- Have whole-wheat bread instead of white.
- Choose fresh or canned fruit at snack time.
- Increase your intake of vegetables and grains by making them the main event. Eat meatless meals more often. Put beans and rice, pasta, vegetable lasagna, or vegetable stir-fry on your weekly menus.



TRIM THE FAT

To reduce fat in your diet, replace fatty foods with less fatty foods.

- Look for low-fat or nonfat milk, cheese, yogurt, and sour cream.
- For protein, eat cooked dry beans often. When you eat meat, choose fish, poultry, and lean cuts of meat.
- Broil, grill, bake, or roast meat instead of frying. Cook ground meat and then rinse it under hot water before using it in the recipe.
- To avoid sauces and dressings that are high in fat, season food with herbs and spices instead.



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- Try to use half the margarine or butter you use now. Use spray margarine.

Eat all the fruits and vegetables you want! Whole-grain pastas, breads, and cereals are good for your heart, too.

If you crave something crunchy at snack time, have plain popcorn, graham crackers, or pretzels. Feel like something cold or creamy? A Popsicle, Jell-O, sherbet, or low-fat ice cream or yogurt may do the trick. Crisp veggies with a low-fat dip make a good snack packed with nutrients. A small serving of dried fruit is sweet, chewy, and high in nutrients, but low in fat.

MOVE A LITTLE, LOSE A LITTLE

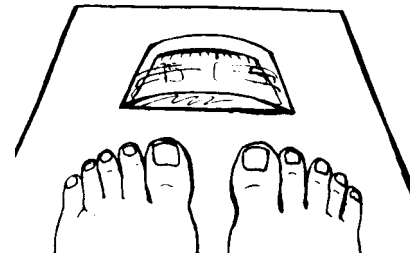
Losing even a little weight helps a lot. If you are overweight, dropping just 10 pounds can bring your blood pressure into the healthy range.

Being more active helps the pounds come off. Try to be physically active in some way every day. Work your way up to 30 minutes a day. It does not have to be done all at once. You can break it up into 10 minutes at a time if you like. Do something you enjoy so it can become a part of your lifestyle, not just a quick fix. Buddy up with a friend or family member to make it more fun.

Just moving around more helps! Lose the remote and get up to change the TV channel. Take the stairs. Walk the mall.

Paired with your healthy diet, a little exercise each day can keep you at a healthier weight. You'll look good and feel great.

Losing just 10 to 15 pounds can bring your blood pressure into the normal range.



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CHOOSE LOW-SODIUM FOODS

Cutting back on sodium may help your blood pressure. We need only a small amount of sodium in our diet, and we usually eat more than we need. Most of the sodium we eat comes from foods we do not prepare ourselves. These are foods like frozen dinners, packaged mixes, canned and dry soups, cold cuts, canned vegetable juices, white breads, and snacks like chips, salted nuts, cakes, cookies, and some cheeses. Restaurant foods are high in salt. Eat less of these foods.

Using foods that are fresh and preparing them yourself when possible can help you control your salt intake.

WHAT ABOUT ALCOHOL?

You may have heard that a glass of red wine each day can help your heart. But if you have high blood pressure and you do not drink now, it is best not to start. Drinking too much alcohol can raise your blood pressure and damage the heart, the liver, and the brain. Also, it may be dangerous to drink with certain medicines. If you do drink, limit it to one serving a day.

One drink is:

12 ounces of beer (about 1½ cups)

or

5 ounces of wine (a little over ½ cup)

or

1 ounce (1 shot glass) of 100-proof
whiskey



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BLOOD PRESSURE MEDICINE

Mild high blood pressure can often be controlled with diet and exercise. You may need medicine to lower very high blood pressure. But even if you take medicine for your blood pressure, you still need to eat right and balance your healthy foods with some physical activity! This can help you need less medicine.

START NOW!

You do not need special foods and complicated meal plans to lower your blood pressure. You can start to lower your blood pressure now by following the guidelines above. Eat a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Keep your diet moderate in fat. Get a little exercise every day. You're on your way!

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