

## Lifestyle Links for Healthy Blood Pressure

**Unwelcome Intruder.** Like a sneaky thief, high blood pressure is silent and stealthy in its course, but serious—even deadly in its effects. It progresses slowly—often without symptoms—but this unwelcome invader causes metabolic mayhem including heart attack and stroke; blood vessel, kidney, brain, and eye damage.

High blood pressure, also called hypertension, is the leading cause of preventable death and disability worldwide.<sup>1</sup> Seventy-five million Americans, or one-third of the adult population, have high blood pressure (140/90 mm/Hg or higher). Another third of the population have prehypertension (blood pressure readings between 120/80 and 139/89 mm/Hg). A blood pressure in this range still increases the risk of heart attack or stroke. A more preventive recommendation for blood pressure is less than 120/80 mm/Hg.

**DASH! to Lower Blood Pressure.** *DASH* stands for Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension—a program initiated by the National Institute of Health. The *DASH* plan emphasizes fresh vegetables and fruits, beans, whole grains, nuts, and other plant foods. It is a near-vegetarian diet that is low in animal fat and cholesterol.

A shift toward plant nutrition also helps you shed extra pounds that lead to high blood pressure, and improve mood and energy so you can handle pressure-popping stress better!

*DASH* studies have shown that:<sup>2</sup>

- Increasing fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, and nuts and limiting saturated fats significantly reduced blood pressure within 2 weeks.
- In addition to the above changes, reducing sodium produced the best results.
- Restricting the consumption of red meat, refined foods, sweets, and sugary drinks reduced blood pressure and cholesterol.
- Combine daily exercise with plant nutrition. Seventy-seven percent of those who combined daily exercise with more plant nutrition and less meat achieved normal blood pressure levels within 6 months.

The *Adventist Health Study* has further shown that:

- Similar to *DASH* diet participants, those who ate little or no meat combined with more plant foods had the lowest blood pressure of any group.

- A vegan or vegetarian diet is linked to a reduced risk for numerous chronic ailments, healthier weight, longer life, and better quality of life.

**ABCs of Lower Blood Pressure.** You can lower blood pressure—one bite at a time, one choice at a time, one day at a time. Just follow the **ABC plan**:

**ADD plant nutrition.** Aim for 4,700 mg of potassium daily. Fruits and vegetables are high in potassium and fiber, both of which protect against high blood pressure. A baked potato contains about 1,000 mg of potassium; beans, spinach, tomatoes, squash, green vegetables, and fresh fruits are also tasty sources of potassium. Plant foods are rich in vitamins, minerals, trace minerals, and vessel-repairing antioxidants and low in sodium, saturated fat and calories.

**TRY IT!** To increase potassium and dietary fiber, eat at least 3 servings of plant foods at every meal—fresh fruit, vegetables, beans, whole grains, or nuts. Increasing these foods will help you bump burgers, fries, and pies—off the menu!

**BEWARE of sodium, sweets, and saturated fat.** Watch out for packaged bandits that tantalize your taste buds but target your good health. Limit sodium intake to 1500 mg, or about 500 mg per meal. Most sodium comes from packaged foods, so check labels. Just one ounce of potato chips contains 200 mg of sodium; a baked potato only has 8 mg. Canned tomatoes pack 400 mg per ½ cup; a fresh tomato has 11mg.

A fast food meal consisting of an 8 oz hamburger, 7 oz. fries, and a 32 oz. soft drink will total 1580 calories, including 68 grams of fat, 31 teaspoons of sugar, and 1405 mg of sodium.

**TRY IT!** Grab a sandwich on whole grain bread filled with fresh veggies (or a Subway Veggie Delight sub with 230 calories, 2.5 grams of fat and 310 mg of sodium). Enjoy refreshing water and a crunchy apple for dessert.

**CHOOSE daily exercise.** Regular, moderate physical activity—at least 30 to 60 minutes most days of the week—can lower your blood pressure up to 9 points. And it doesn't take long to see a difference. Increasing your exercise level can lower your blood pressure in just a few weeks. It will improve mood and lower stress right away, while helping you achieve and maintain a healthy weight.

**TRY IT!** Just a 10-minute brisk walk after each meal will give you a mood boost, lower tension, and rack up 30 minutes of daily activity that will help push blood pressure as well as pounds into a healthy range.

**From Break-in to Break-through!** Stop the unwelcome intrusion into your good health, and experience a health breakthrough that will *restore* your brain, *recover* lost energy, and *renew* blood vessel health. Other lifestyle factors proven effective in lowering blood pressure include shedding extra pounds, avoiding alcohol, getting

adequate rest, and not smoking. Make sure you get adequate daily sunshine or vitamin D. Work with your doctor when making lifestyle and exercise changes, and get treatment for uncontrolled high blood pressure.

## *The Living Word*

It is written that “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy: I have come that they may have life, and may have it in abundance.”<sup>3</sup> A thief has no other purpose but to plunder and destroy life. God’s purpose is to save and preserve life—for today and eternity.

There is a battle going on between good and evil; truth and error; life and death; Christ and Satan. This battle is over the heart, mind, and life of every person. Christ wants to give you a “**more abundant**” life—a life filled with purpose, peace, power, and wisdom—a healthy lifestyle to preserve mind and body—and at last, eternal life where no thief can destroy!

Visit us at [LifestyleMatters.com](http://LifestyleMatters.com) or call 1-866-624-5433 for your resources to build a better brain, body, and lifestyle.

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<sup>1</sup> Curr Hypertens Rep 2013;(15):134-136.

<sup>2</sup> Hall D. The Vegetarian Advantage. Pacific Press, 2010.

<sup>3</sup> John 10:10 (WEB)