

Healthy Living Newsletter

Take Control of Your Health, Your Benefits, and Your Future Wellness / May 2011

Controlling Your High Blood Pressure



- **Lose weight.**
Blood pressure often increases as weight increases. Losing just 10 pounds can help reduce your blood pressure. In general, the more weight you lose, the lower your blood pressure. Losing weight also makes any blood pressure medications you are taking more effective.
- **Eat a healthy diet.**
Eating a diet that is rich in whole grains, fruits and vegetables, low-fat dairy products and lower in saturated fat and cholesterol can lower your blood pressure by up to 14mmHg.
- **Reduce sodium in your diet.**
Even a small reduction in the sodium in your diet can reduce blood pressure by two to eight mmHg. Most healthy adults need between 1,500 and 2,400 milligrams (mg) of sodium a day. But if you have high blood pressure, aim for less than 1,500 mg a day.
- **Read nutrition labels.**
Almost all packaged foods contain sodium. Every time you prepare or eat a packaged food, know how much sodium is included.
- **Keep a sodium diary.**
You may be surprised at how much sodium you consume each day. The diary will help you decide which foods to decrease or eliminate.
- **Use spices and herbs instead of salt to season the food you prepare at home.**
- **Exercise regularly.**
Regular physical activity—at least 30 to 60 minutes most days of the year—can lower your blood pressure by four to nine millimeters of mercury (mmHg).
- **Avoid tobacco products and secondhand smoke.**
The nicotine in tobacco products can raise your blood pressure by 10 mmHg or more for an hour after you smoke.
- **Cut back on caffeine.**
Drinking caffeinated beverages can temporarily cause a spike in your blood pressure, but it is unclear whether the effect is temporary or long lasting.
- **Monitor your blood pressure at home and make regular doctor's appointments.**
- **Make sure that you get enough sleep.**
Fatigue is also a contributing factor in hypotension, especially orthostatic hypotension.

- **Reduce your stress.**
Stress and anxiety can temporarily increase blood pressure.
- **Get support from family and friends.**
They may encourage you to take care of yourself, drive you to the doctor's office or embark on an exercise program with you to keep your blood pressure low.

Source: UPS Road Map to Health, www.mayoclinic.com, www.essortment.com & www.medicinenet.com

HBP & Eyes

Why should I have regular eye appointments if I have high blood pressure?

- Increased pressure (retinopathy) can burst the fragile blood vessels that supply blood to your eyes.
- This condition can lead to bleeding in the eye, micro-aneurysms, swelling of the optic nerve, blurred vision, and complete loss of vision.
- Annual eye exams can be used to determine if you have increased pressure build up in your eyes.

Source: UPS Road Map to Health

Health & Wellness Events

See your local Occ Health Manager and Wellness Champions for information about Health & Wellness activities this month in your facility.

Having Your Blood Pressure Taken



- Before the test, sit for five minutes with your back supported and your feet flat on the ground. Rest your arm on a table at least level with your heart.
- Wear short sleeves so your arm is exposed.
- Go the bathroom prior to a reading. A full bladder can change your reading.
- Get two readings, taken at least two minutes apart and average the results.
- Ask the doctor or nurse to give you the blood pressure reading in numbers.

Source: UPS Road Map to Health

Bananas



Bananas contain three natural sugars—sucrose, fructose and glucose—combined with fiber. A banana gives an instant, sustained and substantial boost of energy. Research has proved that just two bananas provide enough energy for a strenuous 90-minute workout. A banana can help overcome or prevent a substantial number of illnesses and conditions, including:

- **Depression:** Bananas contain tryptophan, a protein that the body converts into serotonin, which is known to make you relax, improve your mood and generally make you feel happier.
- **PMS:** Bananas contain the vitamin B6, which regulates blood glucose levels and can affect your mood.
- **Anemia:** High in iron, bananas can stimulate the production of hemoglobin in the blood and also helps in cases of anemia.

- **Blood Pressure:** This fruit is extremely high in potassium yet low in salt, making it perfect to beat blood pressure.
- **Ulcers:** It is the only raw fruit that can be eaten without distress on over-chronicler cases. It also neutralizes over-acidity and reduces irritation by coating the lining of the stomach.
- **Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD):** Bananas can help because they contain the natural mood enhancer, tryptophan.
- **Stress:** Potassium is a vital mineral, which helps normalize the heartbeat, sends oxygen to the brain and regulates your body's water balance. When you are stressed, your metabolic rate rises, thereby reducing your potassium levels. This can be rebalanced with the help of a high-potassium banana.
- **Strokes:** According to research in the "The New England Journal of Medicine," eating bananas as part of a regular diet can cut the risk of death by strokes by as much as 40 percent.

Source: UPS Road Map to Health

HBP Medications

Here's some tips to help you remember to take your blood pressure medications:

- Take your drug at the same time every day. Try to link it with something else that you do regularly.
- Write it down. Put a reminder note on the refrigerator, on the medicine cabinet, or even on the bathroom mirror.
- Try using a special pillbox that helps keep your pills organized.
- Ask for help. Family or friends can be a great support system. Put together a team. If you have friends who also take medication, help remind each other.
- Ask a friend or relative to call your telephone answering machine to remind you to take your blood pressure drugs and DO NOT erase the message.
- If you have a personal computer, program a start-up reminder to take your high blood pressure drugs or sign-up with one of the free services that will send you a reminder email each day.

Source: www.nhlbi.nih.gov

Preeclampsia



Also referred to as toxemia, preeclampsia is a condition that pregnant women can get. It is marked by high blood pressure accompanied with high level of protein in the urine. Women with preeclampsia will often also have swelling in the feet, legs, and hands. Preeclampsia, when present, usually appears during the second half of pregnancy, generally in the latter part of the second or in the third trimesters, although it can occur earlier.

The exact causes of preeclampsia are not known, but poor nutrition and other causes are suspected.

Symptoms of preeclampsia can include rapid weight gain caused by a significant increase in bodily fluid, abdominal pain, severe headaches, a change in reflexes, reduced output of urine or no urine, dizziness, and excessive vomiting and nausea.

Source: www.webmed.com

Potassium and High Blood Pressure

A diet that includes natural sources of potassium is important in controlling blood pressure because potassium blunts the effects of sodium.

While scientists are able to demonstrate the positive effects of diets rich in potassium, they have not yet been able to exactly explain how potassium accomplishes these effects. One school of thought says that the action of potassium somehow makes blood vessels less sensitive to compounds (for example, hormones) that normally cause blood vessel contraction. Less contraction leads to lower overall blood pressure. Other researchers suggest that potassium, rather than preventing blood vessel contraction, actually works to

actively produce blood vessel relaxation. Regardless of which theory is correct, both agree that relaxed blood vessels are the ultimate effect of potassium.

The recommended intake of potassium for an average adult is about 4,700 milligrams per day. But potassium should be considered as only part of your total dietary pattern. Factors such as salt intake, amount and type of dietary fat, cholesterol, protein, and fiber, as well as minerals such as calcium and magnesium may affect blood pressure.

Potassium-rich foods include:

Sweet potatoes
Greens
Mushrooms
Lima beans

Peas

Bananas

Tomatoes, tomato juice and tomato sauce (look for low-sodium versions)

Oranges and orange juice

Cantaloupe and honeydew melon

Too much potassium can be harmful in many older people and those with kidney disorders. Potassium affects the balance of fluids in the body. As we get older, our kidneys become less able to remove potassium from our blood. Therefore, before taking any over-the-counter potassium supplement, consult your health care professional.

Source: www.heart.org & highbloodpressure.about.com

How Alcohol & Smoking Influence HBP



People who drink alcohol excessively (over two drinks per day) have a one and a half to two times increase in the frequency of high blood pressure. The association between alcohol and high

blood pressure is particularly noticeable when the alcohol intake exceeds five drinks per day. In other words, the more alcohol that is consumed, the stronger is the link with hypertension.

Although smoking increases the risk of vascular complications (such as heart disease and stroke) in people who already have hypertension, it is not associated with an increase in the develop-

ment of hypertension. Nevertheless, smoking a cigarette can produce an immediate, temporary rise in blood pressure of 5 to 10 mmHg. Steady smokers, however, actually have lower blood pressure than nonsmokers. The reason is that the nicotine in the cigarettes causes a decrease in appetite, leading to weight loss. This lowers the blood pressure.

Source: www.medicinenet.com

Magnesium & HBP

Magnesium is a naturally occurring mineral, and is essential for proper functioning of the human body. In fact, more than 300 biochemical processes directly depend on magnesium. While magnesium is the fourth most abundant mineral in the human body, very little actually circulates in the body or other tissues. Instead, most of the body's storage of magnesium is locked in the hard outer layer of our bones. We obtain magnesium through the foods we eat—it is absorbed in the small intestine and excess amounts are excreted by the kidneys.



Magnesium is used in the production of prostaglandin E1, which is a powerful vasodilator. Typically, blood pressure rises as the blood vessels harden and narrow, which causes the heart to exert increased force to circulate blood to body tissues. A vasodilator causes your blood vessels to relax and widen, allowing for easier blood flow and results in lower blood pressure.

Magnesium also regulates the level of sodium, potassium, and calcium within cells. Sodium and potassium work together to maintain normal blood pressure levels that must be properly balanced. Too much sodium with too little potassium leads to high blood pressure, while the opposite—too little sodium with too much potassium—can result in low blood pressure. As far as calcium, individuals with adequate calcium levels tend to have lower blood pressures.

The human body is very good at digesting real foods and absorbing the vitamins and minerals they contain. On the other hand, the human body does not seem to be very good at extracting much nutritional benefit from various types of dietary supplements. The ideal way to get the recommended daily allowance (RDA) of magnesium is from natural food sources. For healthy adults, the male RDA is about 420mg and the female RDA is about 320mg, or 360mg during pregnancy.

Magnesium is found in a wide variety of healthy foods, including white fish, oysters, scallops, almonds, cashews, potatoes, black beans, spinach, and low-fat dairy products. A simple rule of thumb for eating a healthy diet is to eat foods of many different colors.

Source: highbloodpressure.about.com & www.healthcentral.com

Exercise and HBP

Most of us find it difficult to add exercising to our already busy day—even if it will improve our health. However, the activity required to lower blood pressure can be added without making major lifestyle changes.



- Park your car at the far end of the parking lot or in a different lot, so you can “walk” to and from work.
- During the day, take the stairs rather than the elevator.
- Skip lunch and take a 10—15 minutes walk.

If you want to add a half-hour of walking, jogging, cycling, or other activity, get up 30 minutes earlier in the morning and get moving before other things distract you. After a while, most people find that they look forward to their exercise time as a great way to get started in the morning or a pleasant break in their day. Unfortunately, the blood pressure lowering effects of exercise are lost shortly after you stop exercising. So you need a plan to keep yourself exercising. Make it enjoyable and interesting.

Source: UPS Road Map to Health

Questions?

If you have any questions or topics that you would like to see covered in this newsletter, e-mail your suggestions to:



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Sneak Peek

The major topics for the June issue of the newsletter will be:



**Children and Safety
Around the House, Fire Prevention, &
Slips & Falls**