

How to Lower Your Blood Pressure Without Medicines

There are many things you can do to lower your blood pressure if you do not want to take medicines.

Eat a diet high in vegetables, fruits, and whole grains. One way to do this is to follow the DASH diet. More information is available at:

<http://fnic.nal.usda.gov/diet-and-disease/heart-health>

<http://fnic.nal.usda.gov/dietary-guidance/dietary-guidelines>

Reduce salt intake. Consume no more than 2,400 mg of sodium per day.

- Check nutrition labels. Look for lower-sodium items, and track your sodium intake each day
- Avoid processed, prepared, and prepackaged foods
- Choose unsalted nuts or seeds, dried beans, peas, and lentils
- Select unsalted or low-sodium, fat-free broths, bouillons, or soups
- Avoid canned vegetables with added salt
- Don't use salt when cooking

DASH Diet	
High consumption of:	Examples of a serving:
Fruits (four or five servings per day)	1 medium fruit ¼ cup dried fruit
Vegetables (four or five servings per day)	1 cup raw leafy green vegetables ½ cup cooked vegetables 6 oz vegetable juice
Whole grains (seven or eight servings per day)	1 slice whole wheat bread 1 cup whole-grain cereal ½ cup cooked rice or pasta
Moderate consumption of:	
Low-fat dairy products (two or three servings per day)	8 oz low-fat milk 1 cup low-fat yogurt 1½ oz low-fat cheese
Lean meat (two servings per day)	3 oz cooked lean meat (e.g., 90% lean ground beef, trimmed pork chops), skinless poultry, or fish
Nuts, seeds, and dry beans (four or five servings per week)	½ cup or 1½ oz nuts 1 tablespoon or ½ oz seeds ½ cup cooked beans
Fats and oils (two or three servings per day)	1 teaspoon low-fat margarine 1 teaspoon low-fat mayonnaise 2 tablespoons light salad dressing 1 teaspoon vegetable oil
Low consumption of:	
Cholesterol and saturated fat	2 egg whites in place of 1 whole egg
Red meat	3 oz serving up to 3 times per week
Salt	
Saturated fat	
Sweets or sweetened drinks (five servings per week)	1 tablespoon sugar 1 tablespoon jelly or jam ½ oz jelly beans 8 oz lemonade



How to Lower Your Blood Pressure Without Medicines *(continued)*

- Use spices and herbs to enhance the natural flavors of food
- Don't salt food before you taste it
- Take the salt shaker off the table
- Eat less salted potato and corn chips, lunch meat, hot dogs, salt pork, ham hocks, dill pickles, and canned foods

More information is available at: http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/GettingHealthy/NutritionCenter/HealthyEating/Sodium-and-Salt_UCM_303290_Article.jsp

Exercise. Engage in moderate to vigorous aerobic exercise three or four times per week for an average of 40 minutes per session. Some examples of aerobic exercise are:

- Bicycling
- Walking
- Dancing
- Gardening or yard work, such as raking or pushing a lawn mower
- Golfing without using a cart
- Jogging
- Swimming
- Tennis

Lose weight. Talk to your doctor about resources for weight loss information. Your doctor can also refer you to a nutritionist.

Quit smoking. Your doctor can help. More information is available at: http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/GettingHealthy/QuitSmoking/QuittingResources/Resources-for-Quitting-Smoking_UCM_307934_Article.jsp

Limit your alcohol intake. Men should have no more than two drinks per day. Women should have no more than one drink per day. One drink equals about 1 oz or 30 mL.

Meditate. Meditation comes in many forms, including prayer and yoga. Relaxing your body and mind helps bring your blood pressure down.

Check your blood pressure at home. Make sure your doctor talks with you about your numbers.

Regular CPAP use. If you have sleep apnea, use your CPAP machine every night.

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This handout is provided to you by your family doctor and the American Academy of Family Physicians. Other health-related information is available from the AAFP online at <http://familydoctor.org>.

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