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5 Natural Ways to Lower Blood Pressure

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If you have high blood pressure, making some healthy lifestyle changes could save your life. High blood pressure, or hypertension, affects 108 million people in the U.S., according to the Centers for Disease Control—that's nearly one-third of the population.

Hypertension causes structural changes of the blood vessels throughout the body, and they can narrow and scar. This results in reduced blood flow to major organs. Having high blood pressure can put you at risk for stroke, heart attack, heart disease, kidney disease, and death.

Thankfully, doctors say there are some lifestyle changes you can make right now to lower your blood pressure and reduce your risk of resulting health problems.

In fact, major health organizations recommend lifestyle modification as the first step in managing hypertension. This includes the Joint National Committee on Prevention, Detection, Evaluation, and Treatment of High Blood Pressure; the American Diabetes Association; and the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association.

Here are lifestyle changes proven to reduce high blood pressure.

1. Adopt a Heart-Healthy Diet

A [2013 study](#) suggests that dietary modification can be a major factor to help bring down high blood pressure. The DASH and Mediterranean diets stand out as the most effective choices.

"The DASH diet (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) promotes eating whole grains, fruits, vegetables, low-fat dairy products, and limiting saturated fat, cholesterol, sugar, red meat, and salt," says [Leonard Planko, M.D.](#), a board-certified cardiologist in Miami. DASH is considered a low sodium diet. It includes eating foods that are rich in potassium, calcium, and magnesium, which are known to help lower blood pressure, he says.

The Mediterranean diet is a similar approach to eating but with fewer exact guidelines for daily and weekly servings of each food group.

Both diets are considered overall healthy ways to eat, and they may also lead to weight loss, which can help lower blood pressure for many people. [The Framingham Heart Study](#) estimated that excess body weight may be responsible for 26% of cases of hypertension in men and 28% of cases in women.

When you have high blood pressure, it's very important to watch your sodium intake, which will mean carefully reviewing food labels. Estimated average sodium intake of adults in the U.S. is high—approximately 3,600 mg per day, which far exceeds the recommended limit of 2,300 mg per day set by the United States Dietary Guidelines, and the stricter limit of 1,500 mg per day recommended by the American Heart Association.

Any time you change your diet, it may help to focus on what to add. "If someone increases their intake of potassium, this can, in fact, help to lower their blood pressure," says [Elizabeth DeRobertis, R.D.](#), a registered dietitian in Scarsdale, New York. "And if they do not have enough potassium in their diet, it can lead to higher blood pressure."

High-potassium foods include leafy green vegetables, fish, white beans, avocados, potatoes, acorn squash, milk, mushrooms, bananas, and cooked tomatoes. Some experts suggest people with hypertension should eat at least 4.7 grams of dietary potassium per day to lower blood pressure.

Another potential addition to your diet to lower blood pressure is turmeric, a spice that's in the ginger family. There have been [several clinical studies](#) showing turmeric to be effective in regulating blood pressure in the body, when taken long-term.

Always consult with a doctor before making dietary changes.

2. Quit Smoking

Smoking is the single greatest preventable cause of disease and death in the U.S., according to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#). "Nicotine is a stimulant, which damages the blood vessels, decreasing the amount of oxygen the heart receives and increasing your blood pressure," Planko explains. "Often, your blood pressure will drop within a short period of time after you quit smoking."

