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**TIPS FOR LOWERING & MANAGING YOUR**

**HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE**

High Blood Pressure (also known as hypertension) damages your blood vessels and can lead to more serious health issues. High blood pressure is often referred to as the “silent killer” due to the lack of symptoms it presents.

Although there is no cure for High Blood Pressure, it can be controlled by medications and lifestyle changes. Making lifestyle changes can eliminate, minimize, or delay the need for blood pressure medications. Lifestyle changes can also reduce your risk of other serious health issues including risk of heart attack or heart failure, stroke, kidney disease, vision loss, and sexual dysfunction.

**RECOMMENDED LIFESTYLE CHANGES**

**Monitor your blood pressure:**

If you have high blood pressure, seek the care of your primary care physician. High blood pressure requires monitoring on a regular basis and a lifelong commitment. Educate yourself about high blood pressure so you can live a healthier life.

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| **BLOOD PRESSURE CATEGORY** | **SYSTOLIC mm Hg (Upper #)** |  | **DIASTOLIC mm Hg (Lower #)** |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Normal** | **Less than 120** | **and** | **Less than 80** |
| **Pre-hypertension-middle** | **120-139** | **or** | **80-89** |
| **High Blood Pressure**  **(Hypertension) Stage 1 middle** | **140-159** | **or** | **90-99** |
| **High Blood Pressure**  **(Hypertension) Stage 2** | **160 or higher** | **or** | **100 or higher** |
| **Hypertensive Crisis**  **(Emergency Care Needed)** | **Higher than 180** | **or** | **Higher than 110** |

**Watch your weight.**

Maintain a healthy weight. The most effective lifestyle change for reducing high blood pressure is weight loss. Even losing 10 pounds, will reduce your blood pressure. General guidelines: Men are at increased risk if waist measurement is 40 inches or greater. Women are at greater risk if waist measurement is 35 inches or more. Talk to your doctor about an appropriate waist measurement for you. These numbers vary among ethnic groups.

**Eat a well-balanced diet.**

Choose fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat dairy products.Lower your intake of saturated fats and cholesterol. The DASH diet has been helpful to those with hypertension. Keep a food diary to record what you eat, how much you eat, when you eat, and why. Talk to your doctor to determine an appropriate potassium level by eating fruits and vegetables to help reduce the effects of sodium on blood pressure. Always read food labels. While eating out in restaurants, be aware to maintain your healthy eating plan.

**Reduce your salt Intake:**

For most people, reducing your daily sodium intake to 2,300 milligrams (mg) or less. Avoid processed foods. Use herbs and spices to flavor your food instead of adding salt. Did you know that one teaspoon of salt contains 2,300 milligrams of sodium? Read food labels and choose low-sodium alternatives. Cutting back gradually will help you be successful!

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**Limit your alcohol intake.**

Alcohol can be good or bad for your health. Small amounts can lower your blood pressure slightly but moderate amounts or too much alcohol actually raises your blood pressure and makes medications for blood pressure, less effective.

**Participate in regular physical activity**.

Incorporate 30 minutes of daily exercise. Great activities include walking, jogging, cycling, swimming, dancing or weight lifting. Consult your physician about beginning an exercise program.

Maintain a healthy weight. (Losing just 10 pounds can help to lower your blood pressure!)

**Stop smoking:**

By quitting smoking, you can increase your life expectancy and help your blood pressure return to normal. After each cigarette that you smoke, your blood pressure increases for many minutes following.

**Reduce caffeine:**

There is a debate on how caffeine effects on high blood pressure. To see if caffeine effects your blood pressure, check your blood pressure within 30 minutes of drinking a caffeinated beverage. If your blood pressure increases by 5 to 10 mm Hg, you may be sensitive to the effects of caffeine. Talk to your doctor about the effects of caffeine on blood pressure.

**Reduce stress:**

Chronic stress is an important contributor to high blood pressure. Also your reaction to occasional stress, by eating unhealthy food, drinking alcohol, or smoking also contributes to high blood pressure. Determine what stressors are in your life and try to reduce or eliminate the stress.

It may be hard to eliminate all the stressors in your life, but learn to cope with them in a healthy way! Tips to minimizing your stress include changing your expectations and learning to live within manageable limits. Accepting things you can’t change. Make a plan to solve problems within your control. Understand what triggers stress for you. Plan time to relax and do things for you to enjoy. Express gratitude towards others.

**Seek support:**

Always monitor your blood pressure at home and see your doctor regularly! Talk to your physician on how you can monitor your blood pressure at home. Surround yourself with a support system of family and friends to encourage you as you make changes to improve your health. Friends and family can encourage you to take care of yourself, exercise with you, or drive you to your doctor’s office. If you need support beyond your family and friends, consider joining a support group.

**RESOURCES:**

<https://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/Conditions/HighBloodPressure/High-Blood-Pressure_UCM_002020_SubHomePage.jsp>

<http://www.dashdiet.org>

**SOURCES:**

<http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/Conditions/HighBloodPressure/MakeChangesThatMatter/Changes-You-Can-Make-to-Manage-High-Blood-Pressure_UCM_002054_Article.jsp#.WMlS1jsrKUk>

<http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/high-blood-pressure/in-depth/high-blood-pressure/art-20046974>