

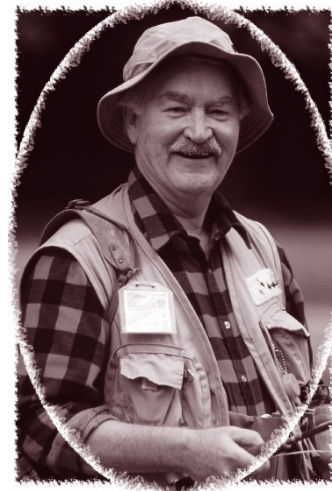
Newsletter Article

Control Your Blood Pressure...for Life!

Because you can't see it or feel it, high blood pressure is easy to neglect - and the tendency increases when drug treatment triggers unwanted side effects such as fatigue, dizziness and decreased sexual drive.

A growing number of Americans are failing to treat their high blood pressure, according to recent studies. Doctors at the Group Health hypertension research program in Seattle estimate that as many as 50% of patients discontinue their medications within the first year.

Be aware that abruptly quitting your high blood pressure drugs can have adverse effects. Talk with your primary care provider about your concerns and your options – there are many new drugs to try that may not affect you adversely and still provide effective blood pressure control.



**Take Heart
Alaska**

In May 2003, new recommendations came out about blood pressure control. People who went to bed thinking they had normal or healthy blood pressure, woke up the morning after the recommendations were released to find that they were “prehypertensive.” The new recommendations in the *Seventh Report of the Joint National Committee on Prevention, Detection, Evaluation, and Treatment of High Blood Pressure* stated that individuals with a systolic

blood pressure (the top number) of 120-139 mmHg or a diastolic (bottom number) of 80-89 mmHg should be considered as prehypertensive and require health-promoting lifestyle modifications to prevent cardiovascular disease. The report recommended the following health-promoting habits to decrease blood pressure. The table to the right explains the average decrease in blood pressure seen with each lifestyle change.

Lose excess pounds.

Dropping a few pounds is sometimes all that's needed to control high blood pressure.

Quit smoking. Like alcohol, nicotine in your system raises blood pressure several points.

Table 5. Lifestyle modifications to manage hypertension**

| MODIFICATION | RECOMMENDATION | APPROXIMATE SBP REDUCTION (RANGE) |
|-----------------------------------|---|--|
| Weight reduction | Maintain normal body weight (body mass index 18.5–24.9 kg/m ²). | 5–20 mmHg/10 kg weight loss ^{23,24} |
| Adopt DASH eating plan | Consume a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and lowfat dairy products with a reduced content of saturated and total fat. | 8–14 mmHg ^{25,26} |
| Dietary sodium reduction | Reduce dietary sodium intake to no more than 100 mmol per day (2.4 g sodium or 6 g sodium chloride). | 2–8 mmHg ^{25,27} |
| Physical activity | Engage in regular aerobic physical activity such as brisk walking (at least 30 min per day, most days of the week). | 4–9 mmHg ^{28,29} |
| Moderation of alcohol consumption | Limit consumption to no more than 2 drinks (1 oz or 30 mL ethanol; e.g., 24 oz beer, 10 oz wine, or 3 oz 80-proof whiskey) per day in most men and to no more than 1 drink per day in women and lighter weight persons. | 2–4 mmHg ³⁰ |

DASH, Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension.

* For overall cardiovascular risk reduction, stop smoking.

† The effects of implementing these modifications are dose and time dependent, and could be greater for some individuals.

Watch your diet. There has been a lot of media attention around the benefit from eating fruits and vegetables. A diet rich in these foods is also helpful in lowering blood pressure. Be sure to include good sources of ***calcium*** (dairy products, canned salmon with the bones, and dark leafy greens), ***potassium*** (bananas, grapefruit, dried fruit, fish, yogurt) and ***magnesium*** (halibut, dry roasted almonds, cashews, and oatmeal) in your diet.

Watch your salt intake Decreasing salt intake has been one of the recommendations for lowering blood pressure for the past 8 years. For a while there was some controversy as to whether this recommendation was necessary for everyone or just those individuals who were "salt sensitive". A recent study, the DASH-Sodium study has put this question to rest. Everyone needs to watch their salt intake, not just those that are "salt sensitive."

Drink less alcohol. Complete abstinence is best.

Accumulate 30 minutes of physical activity. Physical activity can strengthen the heart's pumping action and help control your weight. If you have risk factors check with your health care provider.