

# Terry Talks Nutrition



## The Silent Killer: High Blood Pressure (Hypertension)

heart is working beyond its capacity. The measurement of blood pressure is reported in two numbers. The “top number” or systolic pressure, is the force of the blood against the artery wall as the heart contracts. The “bottom number” or diastolic pressure, is the pressure when the heart is resting between beats.

A “normal” pressure for a resting adult is 120/80. Blood pressure can change with exercise or if you are having a stressful moment, but 120/80 is what is considered average. 140/90 is high blood pressure, and the range of 121-139/80-90 is what is known as “pre-hypertension.” This is pressure that is above what is typically considered normal, but is not elevated enough to classify as high blood pressure. However, we now know that even pre-hypertension can lead to damaged arteries and should never be ignored.

If your blood pressure is 200/120 or higher, you need to seek treatment *immediately*. Please do not ignore this condition as it can truly be serious.

### Consequences of uncontrolled high blood pressure

The tissues of our arteries are made to stretch to allow blood to flow easily through. But if the pressure on the arteries increases, it gets more and more difficult for the artery wall to continue to stretch. Overstretched arteries can develop weak spots that are at high risk to tear (rupture), the cause of strokes and aneurysms.

A build up of plaque in the arteries and veins leads to narrower vessels and increased blood pressure – meaning your heart is working harder and harder to keep blood circulating. Think of how water from a hose sprays out faster and harder when you partially block the nozzle with your finger. That is what happens in your arteries when they become partially blocked by plaque. The blood moves with greater and greater force, putting more and more pressure on the artery walls.

High blood pressure should be taken seriously. If it is not treated, it can lead to

- Heart failure

- Heart attack
- Stroke
- Vision problems and blindness
- Kidney failure

### Prescription drugs to lower blood pressure

There are many different prescription medications used to lower blood pressure. Each works in different ways and each has potential side effects, some significant. However, as much as I wish everyone could avoid synthetic drugs altogether, there are times when they are necessary. I know from the personal experience of a long time friend how dangerous uncontrolled high blood pressure can be. I would never advise anyone to just stop taking high blood pressure medications and try a natural product instead. What I do think is that with better lifestyle choices, and the use of natural products like olive leaf and hibiscus, you can work with your doctor to reduce the dosage of medications, or if you are pre-hypertensive, perhaps delay or avoid the need for prescription drugs altogether.

### Olive Leaf

Olive oil and extract from olive leaves are both good medicine for your heart. Olive oil is full of beneficial, healthy (monounsaturated) fats, and antioxidants. Adding olive oil to your diet can reduce your risk of heart disease by lowering levels of bad LDL cholesterol and raising good HDL cholesterol levels. Look for virgin or extra

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## Key Words

high blood pressure, hypertension, olive leaf, hibiscus, heart, cardiovascular, stroke, CVA, aneurysm, cerebrovascular, pre-hypertension, oleuropein, Olive Leaf Extract, *Olea europaea L.*, Hibiscus Extract, *Hibiscus sabdariffa*


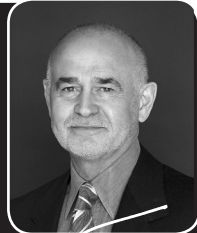
High blood pressure will do very bad things to you. It can cause kidney failure, blindness, brain damage and heart attacks. It can kill or disable you. And the frightening part is that you never feel a thing. This is why high blood pressure is known as the “silent killer.” If high blood pressure caused you to break out in purple spots or caused your elbows to hurt, you’d pay attention immediately. But the majority of people who have high blood pressure (also called hypertension) have no idea there is a problem. Their hypertension is often discovered during a routine physical or at a health fair where free blood pressure checks are available.

When you have high blood pressure, you need to find a way to lower it. It is crucially important to take the pressure off your brain and heart and kidneys. Your doctor likely told you that you need to make lifestyle changes or to take prescription medications to bring it down. But there are also *natural* products that can help you lower your blood pressure quite effectively. I would like to tell you about two herbal extracts that have been shown to do just that – olive leaf and hibiscus.

But first, let’s quickly review some additional background information on high blood pressure, or hypertension.

### What the Numbers Mean

High blood pressure can signal that your

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virgin olive oil, as it has the least amount of processing and the highest levels of beneficial compounds.

Olive leaves have also been shown to reduce blood pressure. In a clinical trial, administration of a special olive leaf extract lowered systolic pressure by 11 points and diastolic pressure by 5 points. The participants experienced additional benefits - their LDL cholesterol levels went down as well. Similar results have been reported in other scientific studies.

Exactly how olive leaf works to lower blood pressure is not fully understood at this time. Researchers believe that it is a combination of its antioxidant activity (much more powerful than vitamin E) which protects the walls of the blood vessels, and because it acts as a vasodilator – that is, it helps widen narrow blood vessels so that blood flows more easily and with less effort by the heart. I recommend looking for an olive leaf extract standardized to the compound oleuropein, which is the key compound associated with olive leaf's ability to reduce blood pressure.

### Hibiscus

You may think of hibiscus as just a beautiful flower. Red hibiscus flowers are often worn tucked behind an ear by women in South Pacific areas such as Hawaii and Tahiti. However, the hibiscus flower has many uses beyond being a decoration. It is brewed as a tea that is consumed in many tropical areas of the world – the Caribbean, West Africa, and even in the Middle East. Researchers testing the effects of hibiscus tea found that it can *significantly* lower blood pressure. In one study, participants with mildly elevated blood pressure consuming hibiscus tea experienced a 7 point drop in systolic blood pressure. Participants with higher blood pressure levels (over 129) had up to a 14-point drop. In a comparison test with the blood pressure medication lisinopril, people drinking hibiscus tea had *better blood pressure reduction* than those taking the synthetic drug, and with absolutely no side effects at all.

Hibiscus contains compounds called anthocyanins, which work in a similar way to some drugs used to lower blood pressure. These plant compounds are angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors. To put it simply, they work by moderating the activity of an enzyme that can cause blood vessels to narrow and blood pressure to increase. This natural ACE inhibitor helps keep blood vessels relaxed and open and therefore blood pressure goes down.

### Conclusion

Managing your blood pressure is one of the healthiest gifts you can give yourself. Please do not take these numbers lightly. The higher your blood pressure, the harder you are working your body and the more pressure you place on vital organs. Weight loss, activity, cooking with olive oil instead of saturated fats, relaxation, and a good night's sleep are a healthy prescription for keeping your blood pressure in the healthy range, and if that isn't enough, add in standardized olive leaf extract and hibiscus. These two herbs can have a profound effect on your blood pressure, and on the rest of your life.

***Terry recommends a formula with these ingredients. Look for it at your local health food store:***

Proprietary Complex 750 mg \*\*  
Olive Leaf (*Olea europaea* L.) Extract standardized to contain 18% Oleuropein, Hibiscus (*Hibiscus sabdariffa*) Extract (25:1)

*When in doubt, always consult your physician or health care practitioner. This column is to provide you with information to maintain your health.*