

Taking care of your blood pressure

If you talk too fast, don't get enough sleep and are constantly dehydrated, you may be more likely to develop high blood pressure (hypertension).

Fast talkers don't breathe properly, which can result in elevated blood pressure, explains Earl Mindell, author of "Vitamin Bible." Adults who sleep fewer than five hours a night have a significantly higher risk for hypertension, according to results of the First National Health and Nutrition Survey.

As for drinking more water, in his book, "Reversing Hypertension," physician Julian Whitaker says this is hypertension's most overlooked remedy.

Chronic dehydration is the cause of many illnesses, says physician F. Batmangbelidj in the book "Your Body's Many Cries for Water."

"If we do not drink sufficient water, the only other way the body has to secure water is through the mechanics of keeping sodium in the body ... When diuretics are given to get rid of the sodium, the body becomes more



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dehydrated," he wrote. Although salt intake has declined over the last 50 years, there has been no comparable decline in blood pressure, says physician David Brownstein. He recommends using only unrefined, whole sea salt, which provides a balance of natural minerals and trace elements.

In his book, "Salt Your Way to Health," Dr. Brownstein tells us to add 1/4 teaspoon of whole sea salt for each quart of water consumed.

Salt sensitivity seems to be genetic and occurs in less than 30 percent of patients with high blood

pressure. The latest research indicates that sodium intake contributes less to high blood pressure than the ratio of salt to potassium. The recommended ration is about five times as much potassium as sodium in your diet.

Unfortunately, the typical American diet is backward. Increasing plant food in your diet and eating up to five servings of fruits and vegetables daily supplies ample potassium and healthy fiber. Vegetarians rarely have high blood pressure.

Areas of the country with "hard" mineral-rich water tend to have fewer problems with blood pressure. The use of "soft" water increases salt and decreases potassium and magnesium.

Hypertension is known as "the silent killer" because it may have no symptoms.

Early warning signs include: sleeplessness, nosebleeds and recurring morning headaches. More women are likely to suffer and die from complications because of late diagnosis. High blood

pressure in men is often related to job stress and unexpressed emotions. Greatest risk occurs among smokers (due to oxygen shortage), diabetics, obese and sedentary people and those who drink five cups of coffee daily.

Side effects of blood-pressure lowering drugs include dry mouth, fluid retention, mineral depletion and dizziness.

Diet, exercise and relaxation practices have proven superior to drugs in many cases of borderline- to mild-high blood pressure. The *American Journal of Cardiology* reports "there is little evidence those patients with marginal hypertension will achieve enough benefit to justify the cost and adverse effects of hypertensive drug treatment."

Consult with your physician about the choices available to you.

Alternatively, many health experts recommend eating generous amounts of garlic, onions and celery (four stalks daily for its diuretic effect). Some people swear by the old folk remedy, apple cider vinegar, which supplies potassium.

Traditional herbs used for heart health include cayenne and hawthorne, however, the herb licorice, when consumed in excess, can cause sodium retention and potassium excretion.

The American Heart Association recommends taking high doses of Omega-3 fatty acids from fish oil for blood pressure control. Deficiencies of vitamins C and E and, especially, CoQ10, have been associated with hypertension. A new proprietary grape seed extract formula is now available at better health food stores. In clinical trials at the University of California, Davis, researchers observed up to a 10 percent drop in blood pressure in adults taking this formula over a four-week period.

Just losing 10 pounds can drop your blood pressure and reduce the need for medications. Exercise is known to help control blood pressure.

New research at Indiana University reported that people who took four 10-minute walks every day reduced their blood pressure for a longer period of time than those who walked non-stop for 40 minutes.

Slow down, sleep longer, drink more water, eat lots of veggies and go for a stroll; your recipe for daily maintenance of healthy blood pressure.

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