

4 Ways to Lower Your Blood Pressure Without Medication

Hypertension strikes one in three American adults. Learn the top lifestyle strategies that can make a real impact on lowering your blood pressure.

About one in every three American adults has hypertension, or high blood pressure. Medication is often prescribed, but that's not the only solution. There are many lifestyle strategies that have also been shown to have an impact. For some, weight loss combined with exercise and a healthy eating plan may even reduce or eliminate the need for medication altogether.

Your doctor can help you decide whether to take a combined approach (medication plus lifestyle) or whether to try following these healthy lifestyle strategies first:

1. Increase exercise

Aerobic exercise can lower blood pressure and can also help with weight loss. It doesn't take a time-consuming workout in a gym to reap the benefits, either.

- As few as 30 minutes of moderate exercise on most days of the week has been shown to be effective.
- Aerobic activities such as walking, biking, swimming and water aerobics often produce the best results.
- Before you start an exercise program, ask your doctor what type and amount of exercise is right for you.

2. Cut your salt intake

One teaspoon (2,400 mg) is the maximum recommended daily amount. Reducing this to two thirds of a teaspoon (1,500 mg) can make a big difference.

- Check labels of food and over-the-counter medication for their sodium content.
- Use herbs and spices instead of salt to flavor foods.
- Avoid processed foods such as canned and frozen ready-to-eat foods, cheeses and luncheon meats.



3. Eat a healthy diet

Follow the DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) guidelines. This has been shown to lower systolic and diastolic blood pressure, even without other interventions.

- The DASH diet is rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains and low-fat dairy products. It restricts intake of saturated fats, red meat and sugar.
- The increased fiber, potassium, calcium and magnesium from these foods are all thought to play a role in reducing blood pressure.

4. Lose weight

For every two pounds of weight loss, you can lower your systolic pressure by one point and your diastolic pressure by 1.4 points.

- Gradual weight loss of one to two pounds per week is most effective.
- Keep a food journal to track exactly what and how much you eat.
- Choose foods low in saturated fat, cholesterol, trans fats and refined sugar.
- Watch your portion sizes.
- Do not skip meals. Eating three meals a day plus snacks is essential in weight management.
- Aim for 25 to 30 grams of fiber daily, which will fill you up and curb your hunger.