



6 Traits to Lower Hypertension Risk

The measure of how hard the blood pushes against the walls of your arteries is called your blood pressure. High blood pressure is called hypertension and, if high, can damage blood vessels, heart and kidneys - which can also lead to a number of problems, such as heart attack and/or stroke to name a few.

But you have to measure your blood pressure to know it – you cannot just look at someone and know it is ok. High blood pressure is considered two consecutive readings of 140/90 or higher. While some do run the risk of high blood pressure just from family history, aging and genes, most can also make lifestyle choices that affect it as well. One study, the Nurses' Health Study, found that these dietary and lifestyle habits can reduce the risk of high blood pressure by 80%.

The six factors that were found to have a major affect included:

1. Body Mass Index (BMI) of less than 25 – This is a measure of body composition which aims to identify individuals with excess weight in the form of fat mass. Reducing weight can positively affect blood pressure.
2. Vigorous Exercise for an average of 30 minutes daily – Exercise should be a part of a healthy lifestyle. If not at 30 minutes, start slowly, but start and make an effort to get there.
3. Adherence to the DASH diet (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) – this diet emphasizes fruits, vegetables, low fat dairy products and overall low fat foods. This also assists with the recommendation of 3,500mg of potassium in your diet as fresh, unprocessed foods have the highest amounts of potassium.
4. Limit the amount of alcohol intake to modest amounts.
5. Use non-narcotic analgesics (pain killers) less than once per week.
6. Intake of 400 mg or more per day of supplemental folic acid.

These recommendations come from a study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association of over 83,000 healthy adult women.