

Managing High Blood Pressure with Lifestyle Changes

Many people manage their blood pressure by making healthy lifestyle changes.

What you eat affects your blood pressure.

Salt or sodium raises blood pressure. So limit the amount of salt you add to food.

Instead, flavor foods with herbs, spices, lemon, or vinegar.

And remember...salt doesn't just come from the salt shaker. Many packaged and prepared foods are high in sodium, like frozen dinners, canned soups, and processed meats.

Read the food labels when shopping to find foods with less sodium.

Look for products labeled "low sodium" or "no salt added."

Your healthcare provider may recommend the DASH eating plan, suggest you meet with a dietitian, or give you other healthy eating ideas. Ask your healthcare provider what resources are available to you.

And don't forget about what you drink.

Alcohol can raise your blood pressure, so if you drink, do so in moderation.

This means no more than two drinks per day for men, and one drink per day for women.

One drink is equal to one beer, one 5 ounce glass of wine, or 1.5 ounces of liquor.

Another lifestyle change you can make is to be more physically active. It will help to lower your blood pressure, as well as other key heart disease risk factors.

Start by looking for ways to be active in your daily life: park farther away from the store, take your dog for a walk, or work in your garden.

Begin a regular exercise program. Find something you enjoy so you stick to it. Start slowly and work up to a total of 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity each week.

You can break it up into smaller chunks, such as 30 minutes, 5 days a week. Then add two or more days of muscle-strengthening activities like lifting weights or working with resistance bands.

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Another lifestyle change is to reach and maintain a healthy weight. Being overweight makes your heart work harder, increasing your blood pressure.

Losing weight can be hard. But making changes to your eating and exercise habits for your blood pressure will also help you reach your weight goal.

The stress of everyday life can build up. If you don't find a way to manage that stress, it can affect your blood pressure.

Find ways to relieve stress, such as hobbies, exercise, and meditation.

Poor sleep can also raise your blood pressure. Most adults need 7 to 9 hours of sleep each night.

Get into a set sleep routine and set an alarm an hour before bed to wind down and relax.

And if you smoke, quit. Quitting smoking helps you manage your blood pressure and improves your overall health. You may need to try to quit a few times before quitting for good.

The important thing is to keep trying until you never smoke again. Talk to your healthcare provider about making a plan to quit.

The benefits of these lifestyle changes go far beyond managing blood pressure...these habits are the building blocks of a healthy lifestyle.

Talk with your healthcare provider about the changes you can make to manage your blood pressure and improve your overall health.