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The information in this pamphlet is NOT a substitute for proper medical care. These are general tips for healthy living and steps that may be of assistance in helping to control high blood pressure through dietary choices.

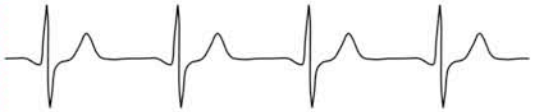
Appropriate medical care is based upon the specific needs of the individual and health management is best guided by your medical provider. Dietary changes are only one aspect of an overall healthy lifestyle. Your medical provider can make recommendations that address your individual needs.

If you need assistance finding a provider, contact your local healthcare facility for a referral.

Information on Heart Healthy Eating can also be found online at:

American Heart Association
www.heart.org

Office of Disease Prevention & Health Promotion
health.gov



Your Diet & High Blood Pressure

Eating Smart for a Healthy Lifestyle

What is high blood pressure?

High blood pressure, also called hypertension, is a serious medical problem. A blood pressure reading has two numbers, a higher number over a lower number (example 120/74). Someone has high blood pressure when the higher number is 130 or greater and/or the lower number is 80 or greater (AHA guidelines, 2017).

Tips for an accurate blood pressure reading:

~ Avoid smoking, caffeine, and exercise at least 30 minutes before your blood pressure is checked.
~ Empty your bladder.
~ Sit quietly 5 minutes before your blood pressure is checked and stay still during the check.

If your doctor tells you that you have high blood pressure or hypertension, they may prescribe medication for you to take to lower your blood pressure and suggest healthy lifestyle changes such as eating a healthier diet, maintaining a healthy weight, exercise, reducing alcohol, and quitting smoking.

What will happen if I do not treat my high blood pressure (hypertension)?

High blood pressure (hypertension) can cause many other serious health problems such as:

~ Heart disease (heart attack, heart failure, abnormal heart rhythms)
~ Stroke
~ Aneurysms (abnormal bulging of blood vessels that are at risk to burst)
~ Vascular disease (poor circulation to the body's other organs and limbs)
~ Trouble with memory or understanding.

Why should I decrease sodium (salt) in my diet?

Too much sodium (salt) in the diet can cause the body to retain fluid which can cause high blood pressure. The optimal goal for daily sodium (salt) intake is 1500 mg; however, a good starting point for most adults is reduce sodium (salt) intake by 1000 mg per day from their usual diet (AHA guidelines, 2017).

Tips on reducing sodium (salt) in your diet:

Fact: ***one teaspoon of table salt=2300 mg of sodium***

Following the "DASH" diet. ("DASH" stands for "Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension") The DASH diet is recommended to help reduce blood pressure along with other healthy lifestyle changes and may also reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and stroke. The approximate amount of daily sodium in the DASH diet = 2300 mg of sodium (Mayo Clinic, 2016).

The basic DASH diet guidelines include the following:

~ Cook with the least amount of salt as possible or use other herbs and seasonings for flavor
~ Check with your doctor or pharmacist before using salt substitutes
~ Read labels before choosing foods. Choose foods with a daily value of less than 5% of sodium. Look for foods labeled as "lower sodium" or "no salt added".
~ Eat more fresh foods. Eat more fruits and vegetables, and low-fat dairy products.
~ Choose fish and skinless chicken or turkey over red meat.
~ Limit sweets, desserts, sugars, and sugary drinks.
~ Limit cheese to 1 oz. per day.
~ Eat less restaurant and fast foods. When eating out, request your food be made with less salt or no salt if possible.

(Dietary information comprised from information obtained from the American Heart Association and the Mayo Clinic websites)

What to Look For:

Key Words:
Low-sodium
Low –fat
Fresh

The American Heart Association *"HeartCheckMark"*

Specially labelled products with healthier options

Reading nutritional labels

USFDA Model Label