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Eliminate This Everyday Food and Watch Your High Blood Pressure Plunge

Uncontrolled high blood pressure is a very serious health concern that can lead to heart disease and increased risk for stroke. The good news is, by optimizing your dietary intake, exercising, and effectively managing your stress, the odds of normalizing your blood pressure are greatly in your favor. If you or someone you love is affected by high blood pressure, then please review and share the guidelines given below. A list of supplementary articles is also included, if you desire further information. Hypertension is actually an easily treated condition, but one that can cause serious damage to your health if ignored.

Your Diet Will Raise or Lower Your Blood Pressure

Are you on a high grain, low fat regimen? If so, I have bad news for you, because this nutritional combination is a prescription for hypertension and can absolutely devastate your health. Groundbreaking research published in 1998 in the journal *Diabetes* reported that nearly two-thirds of the test subjects who were *insulin resistant* (IR) also had high blood pressure, and insulin resistance is directly attributable to a high sugar, high grain diet, especially if accompanied by inadequate exercise. So, chances are that if you have hypertension, you also have poorly controlled blood sugar levels, because these two problems often go hand in hand.

As your insulin level elevates, so does your blood pressure.

As explained by Dr. Rosedale, insulin stores magnesium. If your insulin receptors are blunted and your cells grow resistant to insulin, you can't store magnesium so it passes out of your body through urination. Magnesium stored in your cells relaxes muscles. If your magnesium level is too low, your blood vessels will constrict rather than relax, which will raise your blood pressure and decrease your energy level. Insulin also affects your blood pressure by causing your body to retain sodium. Sodium retention causes fluid retention. Fluid retention in turn causes high blood pressure and can ultimately lead to congestive heart failure. If your hypertension is the direct result of an out-of-control blood sugar level, then normalizing your blood sugar levels will also bring your blood pressure readings into the healthy range.

Fructose Can Cause Your Blood Pressure to Skyrocket

The first thing you need to do is remove all grains and sugars from your diet, particularly fructose, until both your weight and your blood pressure have normalized. Eating sugars and grains -- including *any* type of bread, pasta, corn, potatoes, or rice -- will cause your insulin levels and your blood pressure to remain elevated.

A study published earlier this year discovered that those who consumed 74 grams or more per day of fructose (the equivalent of about 2.5 sugary drinks) had a 77 percent greater risk of having blood pressure levels of 160/100 mmHg. (For comparison, a normal blood pressure reading is below 120/80 mmHg.) Consuming 74 grams or more of fructose daily also increased the risk of a 135/85 blood pressure reading by 26 percent, and 140/90 by 30 percent.

This is significant because the average American now consumes 70 grams of fructose EVERY day! Fructose breaks down into a variety of waste products that are bad for your body, one being uric acid. Uric acid drives up your blood pressure by inhibiting the nitric oxide in your blood vessels. Nitric oxide helps your vessels maintain their elasticity, so nitric oxide suppression leads to increases in blood pressure. In fact, 17 out of 17 studies demonstrate that elevated uric acid levels lead to hypertension. For more information on the connection between fructose, uric acid, and hypertension, please see this article that explains it in greater depth.

I've also interviewed Dr. Richard Johnson, one of the leading medical researchers in this field, about his research into the health dangers of fructose, specifically how fructose causes health problems such as high blood pressure.

My Recommended Fructose Allowance

As a standard recommendation, I strongly advise keeping your TOTAL fructose consumption below 25 grams per day. Since the average 12-ounce can of soda contains 40 grams of sugar, at least half of which is fructose, this can of soda ALONE would exceed your daily allotment.

In addition, most people would be wise to also limit the amount of fructose you get from fruit to **15 grams or less**, because you're virtually guaranteed to consume "hidden" sources of fructose (typically in the form of high fructose corn syrup) from most beverages and just about any processed food you eat.

Fifteen grams of fructose is not much -- it represents two bananas, one-third cup of raisins, or just two Medjool dates. In his book, *The Sugar Fix*, Dr. Johnson includes detailed tables showing the fructose content in different foods, and I've included a sample of these values in the linked article.

Additional Dietary Considerations

1. **Normalize your omega 6:3 ratio** -- Both omega-3 and omega-6 fats are essential for your health. Most Americans, however, are getting too much omega-6 in their diet and far too little omega-3. Consuming omega-3 fats is one of the best ways to re-sensitize your insulin receptors if you suffer from insulin resistance. Omega-6 fats are found in corn, soy, canola, safflower and sunflower oil. If you're consuming a lot of these oils, you'll want to avoid or limit them.
Omega-3 fats are typically found in flaxseed oil, walnut oil and fish, with fish being by far the best source. Unfortunately, most fresh fish today contains dangerously high levels of mercury. Your best bet is to find a safe source of fish, or if this proves too difficult, supplement with a high quality krill oil, which has been found to be 48 times more potent than fish oil.
2. **Eliminate caffeine** -- The connection between caffeine consumption and high blood pressure is not well understood, but there is ample evidence to indicate that if you have hypertension, coffee and other caffeinated drinks and foods can exacerbate your condition. Caffeine is a drug, and while it's entirely legal and widely consumed, it can have a powerful affect on your individual physiology. If you want to eliminate caffeine from your diet, try to do it gradually over a period of days or even weeks in order to avoid withdrawal symptoms like headaches.

3. **Consume Fermented Foods** – Differences in gut flora from one person to another appears to have a large effect on whether or not you develop heart disease. If your gut flora is not healthy, your risk is much greater for heart disease, as well as many other chronic health problems. The best way to optimize your gut flora is by including some naturally fermented foods in your diet, such as sauerkraut and other fermented vegetables, yogurt, kefir, and natto. An additional benefit of fermented foods is that some of them are excellent sources of vitamin K2, which is important for preventing arterial plaque buildup and heart disease.

Use Exercise as a Drug

Physical activity is by far one of the most potent "drugs" there is, and its side effects are exactly the kinds you want to experience. Regardless of the primary reason you start an exercise program, your efforts will be rewarded in countless other ways.

A comprehensive exercise regimen, such as my Peak Fitness program, is very important in producing long-term benefits in people with high blood pressure. Nearly every program should incorporate anaerobic sprint or burst-type exercises one to three times a week, as these have been shown to be even more effective than aerobic exercises at reducing your risk of dying from a heart attack.

If you are insulin resistant, you'll definitely want to include weight training in your exercise program. When you work individual muscle groups, you increase blood flow to those muscles. Good blood flow will increase your insulin sensitivity. Depending on your physical condition when you embark on your exercise program, you may need to consult with a health care professional for help increasing to the intensity required to lower your insulin level. Exercise in combination with the supplement L-arginine has been shown to correct the abnormal functioning of blood vessels seen in people with chronic heart failure. However, I would view this more as a drug approach and not necessarily a supplement you would consider using for optimizing health in general. L-arginine probably works through its interaction with nitric oxide. I would consider it an adjunct, not a replacement, for coenzymeQ10, which is a well-proven therapy for heart failure.

Optimize Your Vitamin D Levels

Believe it or not, the farther you live from the equator, the higher your risk of developing high blood pressure². And did you know that blood pressure is typically higher in winter months than in summer? Sunlight actually affects blood pressure in several ways:

- Sun exposure causes your body to produce vitamin D. Lack of sunlight reduces your vitamin D stores and increases parathyroid hormone production, which increases blood pressure.
- Vitamin D deficiency has been linked to insulin resistance (IR) and Syndrome X (also known as Metabolic Syndrome), a group of health problems that can include IR, elevated cholesterol and triglyceride levels, obesity, and high blood pressure.
- Vitamin D is also a negative inhibitor of your body's renin-angiotensin system (RAS), which regulates blood pressure. If you're vitamin D deficient, it can cause inappropriate activation of your RAS, which may lead to hypertension.
- Additionally, exposure to UV rays is thought to cause the release of endorphins, chemicals in your brain that produce feelings of euphoria and pain relief. Endorphins naturally relieve stress, and stress management is an important factor in resolving hypertension.

- Exposure to appropriate amounts of sunlight is a basic health requirement that extends far beyond blood pressure normalization. Vitamin D helps systems and organs throughout your body to function properly. Ideally, you'll want to get your vitamin D through safe exposure to sunshine or a safe tanning bed, but vitamin D3 supplements can also be used. Please do NOT let your doctor give you a "prescription" vitamin D. That is vitamin D2, which is synthetic, and not nearly as beneficial as the real vitamin D, which is D3 (cholecalciferol).

Keep in mind that if you decide to supplement with oral vitamin D3, you must carefully monitor your vitamin D blood levels to avoid overdosing. (This is why it is highly preferable to get your vitamin D through sun exposure, since there is virtually no chance of overdosing.)

To learn much more about vitamin D test values and the best labs to get your tests done, please visit the linked page. I also recommend watching my free one-hour vitamin D lecture for more information about the incredible health benefits of this essential nutrient.

Controlling Your Stress is Crucial

One in three American adults have high blood pressure (hypertension), and just as many, if not more, battle emotional and mental stress on a day-to-day basis.

Are these two conditions connected?

You bet. As reported by ABC World News on September 16, 2010³, one cardiologist believes the connection between stress and hypertension is undeniable, yet still does not receive the emphasis it deserves. In response, Dr. Kennedy developed a stress-relieving technique he calls "The 15 Minute Heart Cure," a set of breathing and creative visualization techniques that can be done anywhere, anytime. The technique is demonstrated in the ABC World News video above. By teaching your body to slow down and relax when stress hits -- essentially short-circuiting your physical stress reaction -- you can protect your health.

My preferred method is the Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT), an easy to learn, easy to use technique for releasing negative emotions. EFT combines visualization with calm, relaxed breathing, while employing gentle tapping to 'reprogram' deeply seated emotional patterns.

Supplements and Other Alternatives

Although certain supplements may be helpful, it's important to understand they should never be used as a *substitute* for basic lifestyle choices that treat the *real cause* of the problem. Using only supplements without modifying your lifestyle is an allopathic approach not very different from using drugs. In most instances, it is not likely to be effective. Once you have made some beneficial changes to your lifestyle, you can then consider some of the following supplements as a way to further enhance your health:

- **Calcium and magnesium.** Daily calcium and magnesium supplementation can be useful in lowering blood pressure, especially if yours is on the high end of high. However, if you avoid sugars and grains and eat for your Nutritional Type™ (see above), it's unlikely additional calcium or magnesium supplements will be necessary.
- **Vitamins C and E.** Studies indicate that these vitamins can be helpful in lowering your blood pressure. Ideally, you'll want to get the right amount of both these nutrients through diet alone. If you decide you need a supplement, make sure to take a natural (not synthetic) form of vitamin E. You can tell what you're buying by carefully reading the label. Natural vitamin E is always listed

as the 'd-' form (d-alpha-tocopherol, d-beta-tocopherol, etc.) Synthetic vitamin E is listed as 'dl-' forms.

- **Olive leaf extract.** In one 2008 study, supplementing with 1,000 mg of olive leaf extract daily for eight weeks caused a significant dip in both blood pressure and LDL ("bad cholesterol") in people with borderline hypertension. If you want to incorporate olive leaf extract as a natural adjunct to a nutritionally sound diet, you should look for fresh leaf liquid extracts for maximum synergistic potency. You can also prepare your own olive leaf tea by placing a large teaspoon of dried olive leaves in a tea ball or herb sack. Place it in about two quarts of boiling water and let it steep for three to 10 minutes. The tea should be a medium amber color when done.
- **Electrical acupuncture.** Acupuncture combined with electrical stimulation has shown to temporarily lower elevations in blood pressure in animals by as much as 50 percent. It's currently undergoing testing in humans and could be a promising alternative treatment for controlling blood pressure.
- **Breastfeeding.** Studies have shown that babies who are breastfed for more than 12 months have a dramatically lower risk of developing hypertension. Researchers believe long-chain polyunsaturated fatty acids (the same found in fatty fish) in breast milk provide a protective effect for newborns.
- **Quick tricks.** Increasing nitric oxide in your blood can open constricted blood vessels and lower blood pressure. Methods of increasing the compound include taking a warm bath, breathing in and out through one nostril (close off the other nostril and your mouth), and eating bitter melon, rich in amino acids and vitamin C.

Like obesity, high blood pressure is an epidemic. And like obesity, your best treatment is to evaluate your lifestyle and make the necessary adjustments.

A natural approach to preventing disease and healing yourself when illness strikes is always the better choice. In the case of high blood pressure, lifestyle changes -- with particular emphasis on normalizing your insulin levels -- can put you on the road to a drug-free, all natural return to optimal health.