

Hypertension: Helpful Things to *Know* To Keep Your Blood Pressure *Low*



Being overweight or obese. The more you weigh the more blood flow you need to supply oxygen and nutrients to your tissues. As the volume of blood circulated through your blood vessels increases, so does the pressure inside your arteries.

Too much salt (sodium) in your diet. Too much sodium in your diet can cause your body to retain fluid, and also causes the arteries in your body to constrict. Both factors increase blood pressure.



Too little potassium in your diet. Potassium helps balance the amount of sodium in your cells. Potassium causes the smooth muscle cells in your arteries to relax, and this lowers blood pressure.

Not being physically active. Exercise increases blood flow through all arteries of the body, which leads to release of natural hormones and cytokines that relax blood vessels, and lower blood pressure. Lack of physical activity also increases the risk of being overweight.



Drinking too much alcohol. Having more than two drinks/day can cause hypertension, probably by activating your adrenergic nervous system, causing constriction of blood vessels and simultaneous increase in blood flow and heart rate.

Stress. High levels of stress can lead to a temporary, but dramatic, increase in blood pressure. If you try to relax by eating more, using tobacco or drinking alcohol, you may only exacerbate problems with high blood pressure. Relaxation and meditation techniques lower blood pressure.



Non-steroidal Anti-inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs). Ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin, Ibuprofen; comes in 200 mg tablets without prescription from your local pharmacy) can cause marked worsening of existing hypertension or development of new high blood pressure. It can also cause damage to the kidneys, worsening of heart failure, and even heart attack or stroke! **Ibuprofen** is a member of the class of drugs called NSAIDs, which includes **naproxen** (Aleve, Naprosyn, and Anaprox), **sulindac** (Clinoril), **diclofenac** (Voltaren), **piroxicam** (Feldene), **indomethacin** (Indocin), Mobic, Lodine and **celecoxib** (Celebrex).

Cough and Cold Medications (Sudafed and other brands that contain pseudoephedrine and phenylephrine) Cough and cold medicines frequently contain decongestants such as pseudoephedrine and phenylephrine. These medications cause your blood pressure and heart rate to rise, by constricting all your arteries, not just those in you nose.



Certain chronic conditions. Certain chronic conditions also may increase your risk of high blood pressure, including diabetes, kidney disease and sleep apnea.



Too little vitamin D in your diet. It's uncertain if having too little vitamin D in your diet can lead to high blood pressure. Researchers think vitamin D may affect an enzyme produced by your kidneys that affects your blood pressure. More studies are necessary to determine vitamin D's role in high blood pressure.