

COOKING FOR HEART HEALTH



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by

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INTRODUCTION:

Have you been told that you have high blood pressure? Perhaps your doctor has warned you that your blood pressure is getting too high. Maybe you have a family history, or you haven't been taking good care of yourself lately, and you want to make some changes to ensure you don't have hypertension.

Many factors go into high blood pressure including your weight and the amount of exercise you are getting. Even stress can cause your blood pressure to rise. However, one of the biggest causes of high blood pressure is the diet.

Many people are not eating healthy foods. Their arteries are starting to narrow, and their blood pressure is getting higher and higher. In the pages that follow, we will be looking at a way to improve your diet and to start cooking better for a healthier and happier life.



CHAPTER 1

BEST FOODS FOR BETTER BLOOD PRESSURE

What types of foods are you keeping in your pantry currently? If you are struggling with high blood pressure, you likely have a pantry and refrigerator that have some unhealthy options in them. It's time that you removed those unhealthy foods and stocked up on food that can help to lower your blood pressure.

Let's look at some of the best options you can find today and that are readily available.



Beets

Many people consider beets to be a superfood. They're rich in nitric oxide, which helps to open the blood vessels and lower blood pressure.

There are plenty of ways that you can add beets to your diet. You could turn them into a juice and drink them, or you could cook the beets by roasting and eating them whole. You could also add beets to soups, salad, and much more.



Bananas

Bananas are low in sodium and high in potassium, which can help to reduce the effects of sodium. This helps to make it an ideal food for those who want to lower their blood pressure.

A banana has around 422 mg of potassium in it, but the recommended allotment for daily potassium is 4,700. Therefore, you will want to supplement bananas with other foods throughout the day that are also rich in potassium. This might include avocado, mushrooms, tomatoes, or sweet potatoes, for example.



Berries

Berries are filled with flavonoids, which could help to reduce blood pressure. Blueberries, which are also filled with antioxidants, are especially helpful, as well as delicious, and there are plenty of ways you can add more of them to your diet.

For example, you might want to add some to your cereal in the morning, or a salad for lunch or dinner. You could simply have a snack of berries, you could add them to a smoothie, or you could put them into yogurt. You have plenty of options.



Leafy Greens

Leafy greens encompass many different types of vegetables that are great for you. They have a substantial amount of potassium, which can help your kidneys eliminate sodium via your urine. Less sodium in the body is important for helping to lower the blood pressure and adding more greens to the diet makes it easy.

Some of the options that you will want to consider include:

- Kale
- Collard greens
- Beet greens
- Spinach
- Romaine lettuce
- Swiss chard

When you are buying vegetables to add to your diet, make sure that you are opting for fresh or frozen whenever you can. While canned vegetables might have some nutrients, they are typically not as healthy as fresh and frozen. Also, they may have added sodium.



Oatmeal

Oatmeal is simple and healthy. It is a high-fiber, low sodium, and low-fat option that will be a welcome addition at your breakfast table. It also provides energy for the morning. However, you have to make sure that you aren't making healthy food unhealthy by adding the wrong items to it.

For example, don't add a lot of sugar, chocolate syrup, or other unhealthy, sweet items. Instead, take some of the berries mentioned above and add them to the oatmeal. You could also add some cinnamon or even stir in some low-sodium peanut butter.



Lean Protein

To ensure you have a well-rounded diet, you will want to make sure you are getting plenty of protein. However, it should always be lean protein. Red meat is not good for those who have high blood pressure. You will want to make sure that you are choosing lean protein like chicken and turkey.

Additionally, you should add fish to your diet. Fish like salmon and mackerel are high in omega-3 fatty acids, which can help to lower your blood pressure, as well as inflammation. They are healthy, they taste great, and they open up a world of recipe options to consider.





Garlic

Garlic helps to increase the production of nitric oxide in the body, which helps to dilate the blood vessels much like beets. This helps with hypertension.

Garlic is an antioxidant, as well as an antifungal food that has a lot of uses in cooking. It works well in many different types of dishes, and it can serve as a nice substitute for salt when adding some spice without all of the added sodium.



Nuts and Seeds

Certain types of nuts and seeds can also help reduce blood pressure. They are often high in minerals like magnesium and potassium.

Nuts and seeds to consider include:

- Pistachios
- Almonds
- Sunflower seeds
- Pumpkin seeds
- Squash seeds

They can be added to salads or they could be eaten as a healthy snack between meals. Keep in mind that you will want to stay away from nuts and seeds that have been salted, as this will add to your sodium intake, which can increase your blood pressure.





Skim Milk

Skim milk is low in fat and high in calcium, which can help to improve your blood pressure. You can use the milk while cooking, in cereal, or as a drink between meals for some healthy added calories.

If you aren't a fan of milk, but you still want to have the benefits, you might want to try some yogurt. It's best to buy plain yogurt and then add the items that you want to it, such as berries or granola.



Dark Chocolate

That's right, you can even have a little bit of chocolate when you are on a diet aimed at lowering your blood pressure. However, it should always be dark chocolate that is at least 70% cocoa. You can have up to an ounce a day, which has been shown to help with hypertension.

It's important not to go overboard on the chocolate, and to make sure that you are only eating dark chocolate.



Some Other Types of Foods to Consider

Here's a short list of some other foods that are heart-healthy and that you can add to your pantry.

- Quinoa
- Broccoli
- Lentils
- Plain rice or pasta

There is no single magic food that will lower your blood pressure. Instead, it's about finding a healthier way of eating and adopting that as part of your lifestyle going forward. The foods mentioned above will help.



What Types of Food Should Be Avoided?

It's also important to think about foods that you should avoid to help balance your blood pressure.

- Salt
- Processed foods
- Fast food
- Caffeine
- Sweets

Make sure that you eliminate, or at least drastically cut, these from your diet for the best results while adding the foods that we mentioned earlier in the chapter. It takes a commitment to eat right, but you will find that the more you do it the easier it becomes. In the final chapter of the book, we'll discuss some tips on sticking to the plan.



CHAPTER 2

SIMPLE RECIPES TO TRY

In this chapter, we will be taking some of the foods that we mentioned throughout the last chapter to create a handful of simple recipes that you can try. These aren't elaborate, and most people should be able to make them with relative ease. They can be a nice way to get started with a healthier diet.



EASY BANANA OATMEAL

Oatmeal is tasty, easy, and can be made in a host of different ways with different ingredients. Below is just one option with some healthy ingredients that will make a great breakfast. Use heart-healthy items in your oatmeal and experiment to find the flavor that you like the best.

Ingredients:

- 1 cup of rolled oats
- 2 cups of skim milk or unsweetened almond milk
- 1 medium banana
- 1 small handful of blueberries
- ½ teaspoon cinnamon

Instructions:

1. Combine the oats, liquid, banana, and cinnamon in a small saucepan over medium/high heat.
2. Bring to a boil and reduce the heat to low/medium, continuing to stir for about four minutes while the oatmeal thickens and continues to cook
3. When it reaches the proper consistency, remove it from the stove, add it to a bowl, then add the blueberries, and serve.



QUINOA AND CHICKEN BOWL FOR TWO

Bowls are easy to make, and they are a tasty treat for dinner or lunch. As with the other recipes, you can change out ingredients like the vegetables to those that you prefer.

Ingredients:

- 1 cup broccoli florets
- ½ cup carrots, sliced
- ½ clove garlic, finely chopped
- 1 cup zucchini, diced
- 2 cups low sodium chicken stock
- 1 cup uncooked quinoa
- ½ cups chicken breast, cooked and diced
- 5 tablespoons olive oil
- Black pepper

Instructions:

1. Preheat the oven to 400F
2. Toss the vegetables, including the garlic, in a large bowl
3. Add 3 tablespoons olive oil, along with ½ teaspoon of black pepper to the vegetables and toss them again
4. Place the vegetables onto a baking sheet in a single layer
5. Bake at 400F for about half an hour until they are soft.
6. While the vegetables are baking, bring the low-sodium chicken stock to a boil and add the quinoa to cook it.
7. Add some additional pepper to the chicken if you wish, and then brown it in a skillet with the remaining 2 tablespoons of olive oil.
8. Add the quinoa to a bowl once it is cooked, followed by the vegetables and the chicken. You could add some low-sodium hot sauce, or some sliced avocado to the top if you would like.



Fresh fish tastes great, and it's great for you. While this recipe calls for salmon, you could opt for other types of fish that you enjoy, as well, such as mackerel or trout. Just make sure that it's healthy. The recipe below is for four salmon filets. If you are only cooking for yourself, you can have the leftovers for lunch.

You can serve your baked salmon with some of your favorite vegetables, such as roasted squash or broccoli.

Ingredients:

- 4 salmon filets
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper to taste
- 2 teaspoons garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon Italian herb seasoning
- 1 medium lemon

Instructions:

1. Preheat the oven to 400F.
2. Grease a large baking pan.
3. Arrange the salmon filets and add a small amount of pepper to each of them.
4. Stir your olive oil together with the Italian herb seasoning, juice from half a lemon, and the garlic.
5. Spoon the olive oil mixture over each of the filets on the top and sides.
6. Cut the remaining half of the lemon into four slices and place a slice atop each of the filets
7. Bake in the oven for about 16 minutes, or until the salmon is flaky and opaque
8. Remove from the oven when it's done, let cool for a few minutes, and serve with vegetables of your choice.



HEART-HEALTHY SALAD

This is one of the easiest things to make on the list, and you will find that it's one that can have quite a few substitutes, as well. If there are vegetables that you don't like, consider switching them out for another healthy option.

There are no specific amounts given for the ingredients in the salad, as it will vary based on how many salads you are making or the size of the salad you want to make, and you can have as many veggies as you would like.

Ingredients:

FOR THE SALAD:

- Romaine lettuce, chopped
- Almonds, slivered (or pine nuts if you prefer)
- Tomatoes, sliced
- Onion, sliced
- Cucumbers, sliced

FOR THE DRESSING:

- ½ cup olive oil
- ½ cup balsamic vinegar
- ½ teaspoon ground mustard
- Black pepper to taste

Instructions:

1. Combine the vegetables and the almond slivers.
2. Combine the ingredients for the dressing and whisk them together.
3. Add some of the dressing and enjoy.

Keep in mind that these are just a few recipes that you can try when you are cooking with an aim to help lower blood pressure. There are plenty of other options out there that you can find on the Internet, as well as through cookbooks that are specifically geared toward those who have high blood pressure.

Getting accustomed to eating a lot of new and healthy foods rather than processed foods, fast food, and junk food that a person is accustomed to eating can be difficult, so you must take the time to find foods that you enjoy and recipes that taste good. Fortunately, there are plenty of tasty options available, as you can see.



CHAPTER 3

TIPS FOR STAYING ON A HEART-HEALTHY DIET

Starting a heart-healthy diet is easy. Changing your lifestyle to ensure that you continue to eat heart health is not quite as simple. In this final chapter, you will find a list of tips that you will want to keep in mind that can help to make it easier for you.

1. Think about your health and the motivations for the diet in the first place – lowering your blood pressure and getting your body into better shape.
2. Keep unhealthy foods out of the house.
3. Don't shop when you are hungry.
4. Choose foods that you enjoy.
5. Remember to buy healthy snacks.
6. Exercise – it can make it easier to maintain healthy eating behaviors.
7. Track your progress for motivation.
8. Get others in the family or household to join you.

If you have trouble sticking to your new dietary lifestyle, know that you aren't alone. A lot of people fall off this proverbial wagon from time to time. They have a slice of birthday cake or a bad weekend when they eat unhealthily. It happens to just about everyone. Don't punish yourself for this. Instead, refocus and recommit.

Over time, and as you start to collect additional great recipes, it will become easier.



CONCLUSION:

Controlling the type of food that you are cooking is one of the best and simplest ways to combat high blood pressure. Eating healthier will have some great benefits in addition to helping you lower your blood pressure. You are likely to lose some weight, which can make you feel better and look better. Also, you will find that when you are eating right, you have more energy. It can even help to get your digestive system back in order.

It's time that you started to take control of your health and the tips and recipes in the book will help to make it easier.



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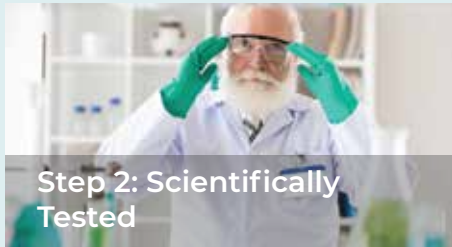
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2. <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/322284#fifteen-foods-that-help-to-lower-blood-pressure>
3. <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/articles/4249-hypertension-and-nutrition>