

THE 7 HABITS OF A HEALTHIER HEART



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by

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INTRODUCTION:

Maintaining healthy blood pressure is essential regardless of your age. Those who have higher blood pressure tend to be at a greater risk for a host of health issues. High blood pressure can cause the arteries to thicken, which means there will be less room for the flow of blood. Narrow arteries can become clogged more easily, as well, and blockage of the arteries can lead to a stroke or a heart attack.

Fortunately, there are things you can do that will help you get your blood pressure back into balance, which can improve your health and wellbeing. We've collected these habits that you will want to adopt into the pages that follow.



HABIT 1:

GET SOME MORE EXERCISE

One of the first and more important habits that you will want to adopt on your way to better blood pressure and a healthier heart is the amount of exercise that you are getting. In today's world, people often lead a sedentary lifestyle. They sit on their way to work, they sit while they are at work and on the way home, and then they sit on the couch until they go to bed.

The heart is not getting enough exercise, so it is not going to function as efficiently as it should. You need to move more often throughout the day and adding exercise to your routine is a great way to do it.

Regular physical activity can help to reduce your blood pressure. It's ideal to get between 30 minutes and 60 minutes of exercise each day to get the best results. If you can't exercise for a full 30 minutes right now, work up to it slowly and continue adding more time until you can get in an hour of activity a day.



Find the Right Exercise

There are plenty of ways that you can get some exercise whether you are at home or you can get out. Walking around the neighborhood, hiking, swimming, lifting weights, tennis, and using cardio equipment are just a few of the options. The key is finding exercises that you will enjoy and that you will want to continue with. Switch up the types of exercises you are doing occasionally, so you don't get bored.

Of course, depending on your current physical capabilities, you might not be able to do certain exercises. That's perfectly fine. You simply need to find exercises that you are capable of doing and that you enjoy and then commit to doing them.

As you start to exercise more, you will not only find that your blood pressure can drop to a healthier level, but that you also may start to lose weight and have more energy. Exercise is great for your health for a host of reasons, not just your blood pressure, so make sure you make it a habit and add it to your routine.



HABIT 2:

EAT HEALTHY FOODS

In addition to getting exercise, you also want to make sure that you are fueling your body correctly if you want to be healthy and reduce your blood pressure. This means you will need to be mindful of the types of foods that you are bringing into your home and preparing.

You must avoid foods that are too salty, processed foods, greasy foods, sweets, and other unhealthy food options that can cause inflammation and that will clog the arteries. No matter how tasty some of those treats might seem, they are not worth taking years off your life and making you unhealthy. There are plenty of delicious types of food that can still provide you with great tastes you crave.



Here's a list of some of the foods that you will surely want to add to your diet while removing the unhealthy options from your pantry:

- **LEAFY GREENS LIKE SPINACH, KALE, AND ROMAINE LETTUCE**
- **BERRIES**
- **BEETS**
- **OATMEAL**
- **BANANAS**
- **ALMONDS, PISTACHIO NUTS, AND PUMPKIN SEEDS**
- **SALMON AND OTHER FISH HIGH IN OMEGA-3 FATTY ACIDS**
- **QUINOA**
- **SKIM MILK**
- **LOW FAT COTTAGE CHEESE**
- **FRESH OR FROZEN VEGETABLES**
- **SKINLESS CHICKEN OR TURKEY**



These are some of the best types of foods that you can add to your diet, and as you learn to eat right, you will start to find plenty of other foods that you can add to the list. There are many different types of dishes you can make, and you will never get bored with your new dietary lifestyle.

It is important to keep in mind that this is not the type of diet that you will eventually quit once you have lowered your blood pressure. This diet is a new way of living, so you can stay healthy for the rest of your life.

HABIT 3:

CUT OUT THE BAD HABITS

If you have some bad habits, you aren't alone. Many people have some bad habits that they wish they would be able to quit, but they haven't made the choice yet. Some of those bad habits could be causing your blood pressure to be higher than it should be, not to mention a host of other health issues.

Two of the biggest bad habits that you will want to replace with good habits are smoking and excessive drinking.

Smoking

Smoking will cause issues with your lungs and your ability to breathe properly, and it can result in cancer. It also constricts the blood vessels, which means you will have higher blood pressure. The sooner you quit smoking the better off you will be. Not only will it help to reduce your blood pressure, but it will also help to prevent the development of other health issues.

Quitting smoking can be difficult, but it is possible for anyone. Various cessation methods can be used, such as patches or nicotine gum, for example. Others are successful quitting cold turkey. Find the method that works for you.



Drinking

Having an occasional drink is not necessarily a bad thing for most people. A glass of red wine from time to time or a beer or two on the weekends should not be a problem. The issue results when drinking is excessive.

Having three or more drinks in one setting will raise your blood pressure temporarily. Repeatedly having three or more drinks a day can cause long-term increases to your blood pressure.

If you have high blood pressure, and you are a heavy drinker, it's a habit that you will want to kick sooner rather than later. If you are an excessive drinker and you don't think you will be able to quit on your own, there is no shame in getting help from a professional.



HABIT 4:

FIND WAYS TO REMOVE STRESS

When the body and mind undergo stressful conditions, it can increase your blood pressure. Sometimes, the spikes to the blood pressure are only temporary. However, stress also has the potential to cause higher blood pressure in the long-term. Therefore, you must adopt some healthy habits that can help you to reduce your blood pressure, both in the short-term and the long-term.

We've already discussed exercise, which is one of the best ways to help reduce a person's stress. However, there are also other ways that you can reduce your blood pressure. Below are some tips that can help.

Stress Reduction Tips

One of the first things that you will want to do is look at some of the stressors in your life. What is causing so much stress? It might be your money situation, your living situation, or your family. It could be work, the news, or a host of other issues. Try to find the causes of your stress and then find ways that you can eliminate, or at least reduce those causes.



You might also want to look at your daily schedule. You might be running yourself too thin with all you are trying to do. It might be time to simplify that schedule if you can. If there are activities that take up a lot of time but aren't important, consider removing them.

You should also consider meditation and breathing techniques that can help your body relax. Learning basic meditation is easy, and you can do it in small doses throughout the day to help you keep your stress levels – and your blood pressure – under control.



Also, you should strive to get plenty of sleep each night. If you have too little sleep it not only puts stress on the body, but it can also alter your mood and make some problems seem larger than they are.

Everyone will have their own ways to deal with stress, and you will need to find yours. Don't underestimate just how much stress can affect the way you feel, your overall outlook on life, and your blood pressure.

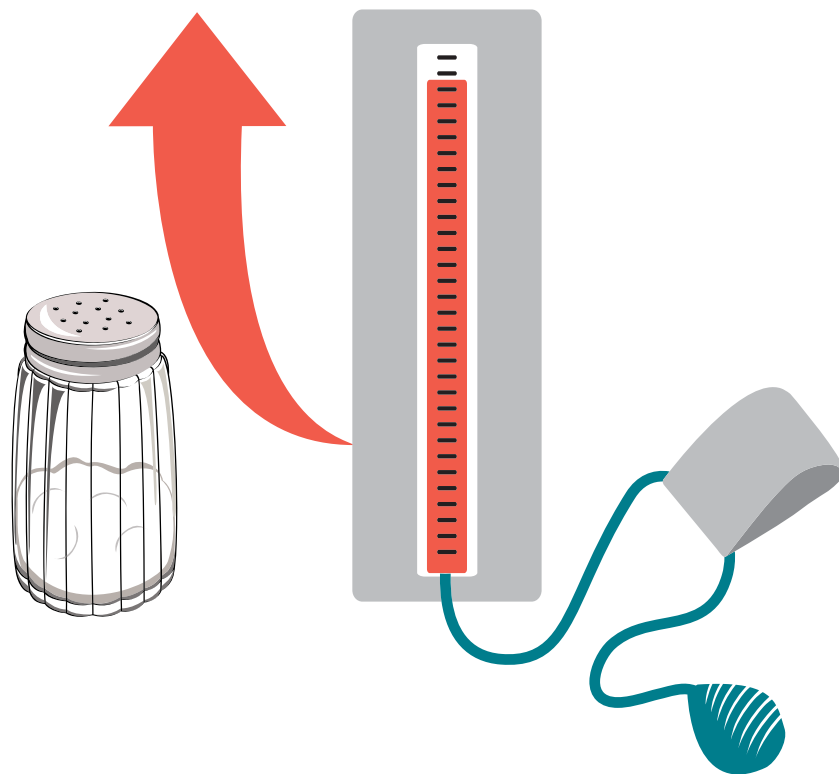
HABIT 5:

LOOK AT THE SODIUM IN YOUR FOOD

Even though we already mentioned eating a healthy and balanced diet, it is important to talk about sodium again on the list of good habits. This is because many people believe that they are eating healthy, but they aren't taking the time to look at the amount of salt and sodium in some of the foods and drinks they are enjoying.

You need to get into the habit of understanding just how much salt you are taking in during the day. For the average person, keeping the sodium intake to 2,300 mg or fewer per day is fine. However, if you already have high blood pressure, you need to reduce the amount substantially.

People who have high blood pressure should try to keep their sodium intake to around 1,500 mg or fewer per day. This includes not only the salt that you are adding to your food but also the sodium content of any packaged foods that you might have eaten for the day.



For example, if you are putting some low-fat shredded cheese onto your salad, make sure you know how much sodium that is adding. Here's a list of some of the high-sodium foods you will want to avoid:

- **Shrimp**
- **Prepackaged or restaurant soup**
- **Ham**
- **Cottage cheese (only buy low-sodium, and still be sure to look at the sodium content)**
- **Prepackaged salad dressing**
- **Prepackaged vegetable juice**
- **Canned vegetables**
- **Cold cuts**
- **Jerky and other types of dried meats**
- **Pickles**
- **Hot dogs**
- **Prepackaged tomato sauce**
- **Bread**
- **Canned meat**
- **Frozen meals**



These are some of the foods you will want to cut out of your diet, or at least check the sodium content on, before buying and eating. Once you get into the habit of checking labels for sodium, it will become second nature.

HABIT 6:

KEEP A HEALTHY WEIGHT

Even though you might be eating better and getting in more exercise, it doesn't always mean that you are losing weight. If you are overweight, even slightly, it's not enough to simply eat well and exercise a few times a week. You need to step things up so you can get to a healthy weight and then maintain that weight.

Losing weight will help you to lower your blood pressure. Carrying around extra weight means that the heart has to work harder, and this means your blood pressure is going to be higher than it should be. Additionally, carrying the extra weight is not good for your body for a host of reasons. It can increase your risk of having high cholesterol, heart disease, and diabetes.

To lose the initial weight, so you reach a healthy weight, it might mean that you need to add more exercise, or that you need to alter your diet further. If you are doing everything that you can, but you still find trouble getting to a healthy weight, you may want to speak with a professional. They can help to put you on a proper plan to help you lose weight.



Maintenance

One of the mistakes that many people make when they are losing weight is thinking that they can go back to their old lifestyle once they have achieved their goal. However, this just puts them on the slippery slope that will return them to their heavier weight. Many people end up gaining even more weight when they keep yoyoing like this.

Just like with your diet, understand that this is a complete lifestyle change for the better. You will want to monitor your weight, just like you monitor your blood pressure. If you notice that you are gaining weight again, reevaluate what you are doing. You will likely find that you are taking shortcuts, such as not exercising as much. Get back on track and keep your weight at a healthy level.



HABIT 7:

CONNECT WITH SUPPORTIVE PEOPLE IN YOUR LIFE

If you are going to commit to lowering your blood pressure, you may find it easier when you have some great people in your life who are supportive of you. Some of them may be willing to take on some of the above habits with you, such as exercising and eating better.

Find Your Support System

Finding supportive people can be done through your immediate connections with family and friends. They might be coworkers or even people that you have connected with online.

You will find that most of them will be supportive of you because they want you to be healthy. As mentioned, some of them might want to join you on your journey. However, that's not always the case, and that's okay. You can only control yourself and your own habits.

Still, there might be some people in your life who are unsupportive and who might be acting against your best efforts for one reason or another. You are going to need to deal with those people rather than simply try to ignore them.



Cut Ties with Unsupportive People

Some people don't take their health seriously and they don't believe that you should either. They may even try to sabotage you. Some might offer you unhealthy food, try to get you to drink or smoke again, or simply talk down to you when you are making healthier choices in your life, saying that you should be free to do what you want to do and that those bad habits aren't so bad.

You can't let this stand.

As much as it might hurt, you will need to talk to those people about their behaviors and cut them out of your life if they continue with their actions. After all, it is your health and your life that you are talking about.



CONCLUSION:

The habits of healthier, balanced blood pressure are helpful guidelines for those who want to stay healthy overall. When you follow the tips that are discussed throughout the book, you will not only find that it helps with your blood pressure, but that it can help with other health issues that you might have had.

Naturally, you will still want to have your doctor check your blood pressure when you go in for checkups to make sure that you are healthy, and you will want to follow the advice they provide. However, the tips and information presented here are a great way to get ahead of the curve and to make healthy changes in your life now and well into the future.



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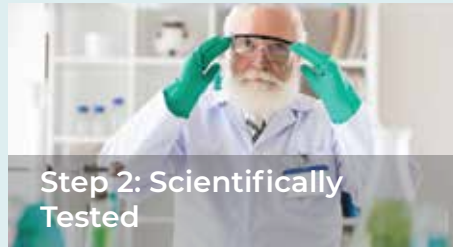
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1. <https://www.cobizmag.com/5-tips-for-setting-up-your-home-office/>
2. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/high-blood-pressure/in-depth/high-blood-pressure/art-20046974>
3. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/nutrition-and-healthy-eating/in-depth/dash-diet/art-20048456>
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