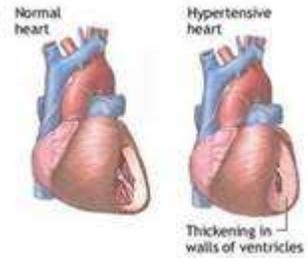


CERTIFIED MEN'S HEALTH COUNSELOR ONLINE COURSE: SESSION 11

- High Blood Pressure, High Cholesterol, and Herbal Programs

Hypertension: What Is It?

Hypertension is a condition that causes chronic high blood pressure. It can occur as the result of another disease or condition, or it can occur randomly with no identifiable cause. Doctors diagnose patients with hypertension when their blood pressure is repeatedly above 140 mmHg systolic or 90 mmHg diastolic. At a normal level, blood pressure hovers around 120 mmHg systolic and 80 mmHg diastolic. The first number represents the pressure in the arteries as the blood is pumped forward and the heart contracts. The lower number measures pressure after the heart contracts and relaxes. To be diagnosed with hypertension, you need to experience chronic high blood pressure for an extended period of time.



Hypertension occurs as a result of a variety of factors including diet, weight, genetics, stress levels, and environmental factors. Some types of hypertension have no known cause, while other types have a clearly identifiable cause. Hypertension puts people at risk for strokes, heart attacks, heart failures, aneurisms, and other diseases. Your risk may be higher if you are overweight, if you do not exercise, if you eat a diet that is high in fats and salt, or if you are prone to stress.

With some forms of hypertension, there is no conclusive medical cause. With other forms of hypertension, there is a clear condition that is creating symptoms. The majority of hypertension cases have no identifiable cause.

It is important to have your blood pressured monitored regularly, either at home or at the doctor's office. In many situations, hypertension does not produce any symptoms, so high blood pressure will be the only indication of whether you are at risk for any complications. For this reason, hypertension is frequently nicknamed "the silent killer."

As hypertension becomes more severe, symptoms can include seizures, lethargy, irritability, nausea, vomiting, insomnia, confusion, and headaches. You may also experience chest pain, noise in the ear, pain in the chest, or nose bleeds.

Hypertension Symptoms & Warning Signs

Symptoms

For most cases of mild to moderate hypertension, there are no symptoms. In fact, the condition has earned the nickname "silent killer" since the disease shows no symptoms until it progresses to a stage where permanent damage and severe problems such as heart attacks and strokes can occur.

Some people with mild to moderate hypertension experience headaches, dizziness, blurred vision, and shortness of breath. Other possible symptoms include heart palpitations (irregular heartbeat), fatigue, and impotence. If you experience these symptoms, you should visit a doctor immediately to determine whether the cause is hypertension or another medical condition.

Severe cases of hypertension cause symptoms of painful headaches, confusion, hallucinations, vision problems, nausea, and vomiting.

Infants and children with hypertension may show similar or different symptoms. Children and newborns may experience seizures, lethargy, and respiratory problems. They may also seem irritable. Children might complain of headaches, fatigue, and vision problems - they might have trouble sitting through class, participating in sports, and doing homework.

For some adults, infants, and children, hypertension may result from an underlying cause such as diabetes or Cushing's syndrome. Generally, these conditions produce additional symptoms that are unique to the specific disorder.

People with hypertension will experience chronic high blood pressure, which is a risk factor for severe medical conditions such as renal failure, aneurysms, heart attacks, and strokes. High blood pressure can also significantly lower your life expectancy, so you should listen to your doctor's recommendations for keeping your blood pressure under control.

Normally, a medical professional will take your blood pressure each time that you visit the doctor's office. If your blood pressure is repeatedly high over several weeks, then the doctor may diagnose you with hypertension. In very rare situations, people only experience high blood pressure when they visit the doctor. This phenomenon occurs because the doctor's office, for some people, can be a very stressful environment. You may be misdiagnosed with hypertension if your blood pressure is falsely high. At-home blood pressure monitoring kits are relatively inexpensive and readily available at local drugstores, so you may benefit from monitoring your blood pressure on a daily basis at home. This way, you can monitor your symptoms more closely for an accurate diagnosis.

There are two general types of hypertension. The first, primary or essential hypertension, occurs without a clear cause. This type of hypertension occurs as a result of a combination of factors including diet, lifestyle, activity levels, and heredity. The second type of hypertension, secondary hypertension, occurs as a symptom of an underlying health condition. Once you treat the underlying condition, the secondary hypertension should go away.

Secondary hypertension tends to be rarer than primary hypertension. As a result, the underlying medical condition may go unnoticed if the doctor has no reason to perform additional diagnostic tests. The doctor may only treat you for primary hypertension, leaving the true problem untreated. For this reason, you should report all unusual symptoms to your doctor as soon as possible.

You may notice that your blood pressure and symptoms fluctuate with different medications. Some prescription and non-prescription drugs can cause your blood pressure to become elevated. Talk to your doctor about whether your medication is causing changes to your blood pressure.

Warning Signs

If you have a family history of hypertension or high blood pressure, it is important that you pay attention to your blood pressure tests. You may not notice other symptoms, so make sure that you pay close attention to any changes in your body.

If you have recurring headaches, you should have your blood pressure monitored regularly to make sure that your blood pressure is not elevated or fluctuating. Nausea, vomiting,

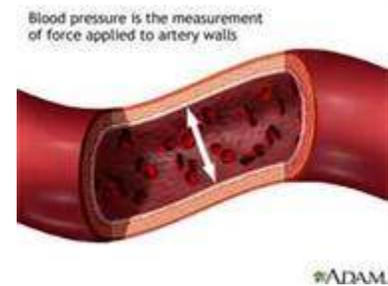
fatigue, and intense headaches are symptoms of other underlying conditions such as a thyroid or hormone disorder. Symptoms of extremely high blood pressure may lead to more serious problems such as seizures, convulsions, and blindness.

Hypertension could also be a warning sign of more serious underlying conditions. It is recommended that patients follow up on their blood pressure tests with blood tests and other routine physical exams.

Hypertension Causes & Risk Factors

What Are the Causes?

A distinction must be made between hypertension and high blood pressure. High blood pressure can occur at any point in time for a variety of reasons including stress, alcohol consumption, diet, and fatigue. Usually, high blood pressure is fleeting and will return to normal within a relatively short amount of time. No treatment is necessary, but the doctor may require that you relax and exercise.



Hypertension, on the other hand, is a chronic condition that is persistent and potentially dangerous. If you have high blood pressure, the doctor will have you sit for regular blood pressure tests to see if your symptoms stabilize. If you continue to experience high blood pressure, then you will likely be diagnosed with hypertension.

The majority of hypertension cases are primary or essential, meaning that there is no identifiable cause. A small number of hypertension cases are secondary, meaning that the cause is a symptom of an identifiable cause such as a brain tumor or kidney disorder. Reasons for all six types of hypertension involve a combination of environmental and hereditary factors. Your diet and lifestyle can influence whether your blood pressure is high. If you are dehydrated or if you have an excessive amount of salt in your system, you are at risk for high blood pressure. For this reason, it is important to eat balanced meals that limit salt and fat intake. Your lifestyle can also affect whether you develop hypertension. A sedentary lifestyle can cause hypertension; however, it is possible to reverse and control the condition with exercise. High levels of stress can also cause you to develop hypertension.

Other factors that can cause hypertension include your personal and family genetic history. Typically, hypertension runs in the family. If your parents had it, then you might also be at risk. The conditions that hypertension triggers, including diabetes, heart disease, and strokes also run in the family.

It is difficult to reverse or control hypertension without a clear understanding of the cause. With secondary hypertension, the cause of your high blood pressure is recognizable and tends to be related to kidney problems, thyroid disorders, tumors, and sleep apnea. After identifying the underlying cause, it is possible to control and reverse the effects of hypertension.

Who's at Risk?

Hypertension affects certain demographic groups more than others. Studies reveal that the disease occurs at higher rates among populations of older black women. In general, blacks are at higher risk for the disease than whites. The reasons for this trend are generally unknown but might be related to diet, lifestyle, and genetic factors.

Hypertension is frequently nicknamed "the silent killer." People with hypertension may not realize that their blood pressure is chronically high and cannot take preventative measures against strokes, heart attacks, and high cholesterol.

Similarly, people may show symptoms of hypertension without showing additional symptoms of an underlying condition. Because the majority of hypertension cases are primary, meaning that there is no clearly identifiable cause, an underlying condition such as kidney failure or tumors may go unnoticed unless other symptoms are present or unless the patient is required to undergo preventative testing.

People who experience high levels of stress are at risk for hypertension-related complications such as strokes and heart attacks. Stress related to work, family, and other factors can all cause symptoms to become more severe. In rare situations, patients who also suffer from sleep apnea may experience disturbances in their sleep. Some hypertension patients experience neurological problems.

Women who are pregnant should seek close medical attention since complications can result for both the mother and baby. Mortality is a risk for infants with mothers who experience hypertension. Some doctors prescribe bed rest to pregnant women who experience hypertension.

All hypertension are at an increased risk for strokes, renal failure, heart attacks, and coronary artery disease. Medications can help reduce these risks, but the medications themselves can pose additional risks for other conditions.

If you start to develop symptoms such as chest pain, confusion, ringing in the ears, bloody noses, fatigue, and vision problems, you should visit a doctor as soon as possible to rule out the different forms of hypertension. Since mild to moderate hypertension typically goes unnoticed, symptoms that are prevalent could indicate a more serious complication. You should visit the doctor as soon as possible for your routine diagnostic tests to prevent problems in the future.

Hypertension Types

There are two main types of hypertension, and there are four types of hypertension that are less common. Depending on the type of hypertension, the cause could be known or unknown. It is suspected that hypertension results from a combination of factors related to genetics, diet, and lifestyle.

Primary hypertension, also known as essential hypertension, is the most common type of hypertension. With this type of hypertension, there is no single identifiable cause for high blood pressure. While an explanation might be possible, no underlying disease, condition, or disorder causes the high blood pressure to occur. Instead, hypertension occurs because your genes, diet, and lifestyle. You may be able to keep your hypertension under control by monitoring your diet, reducing your salt intake, exercising, and relaxing in order to reduce stress levels.

Secondary hypertension is a less common form of the disease that occurs because of a specific condition. Disorders including sleep apnea, tumors, and kidney failure can all cause hypertension to occur as a side effect. If you treat the underlying condition, the hypertension will subside.

The four less common types of hypertension include malignant hypertension, isolated systolic hypertension, white coat hypertension, and resistant hypertension.

Primary Hypertension

Primary hypertension is the most common type of hypertension and accounts for 95% of cases. It is a complex disorder with no isolated cause. Many factors can put you at risk for primary hypertension including obesity, diet, environment, stress, and sedentary lifestyle. High sodium and family history of hypertension can also put you at risk for this condition. Even though there is no single identifiable cause, a variety of factors can trigger the condition.

Generally, primary hypertension runs in the family. If your parents or grandparents had it, then you are likely to develop the condition as well. For this reason, it is important that you undergo regular screenings to treat hypertension before it becomes serious and causes life-threatening complications.

Doctors will treat primary hypertension by encouraging you to undergo certain lifestyle modifications. You may need to lose weight, adjust your diet, or adopt a regular fitness routine to keep your symptoms under control. If these lifestyle modifications are unsuccessful, then you may need to start taking medication on a daily basis to keep your symptoms under control.

Secondary Hypertension

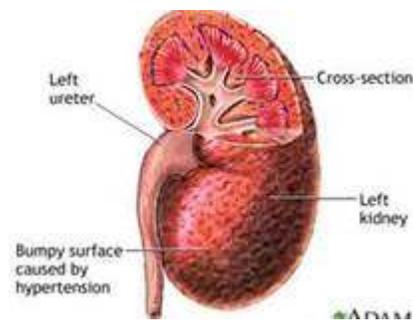
With this type of high blood pressure, the cause is apparent and can be an underlying condition such as a thyroid problem or Cushing's syndrome. Problems with the kidneys, sleep apnea, and some conditions during pregnancy can cause secondary hypertension.

When you treat the original symptom, the secondary hypertension will go away. In some cases, it may not be possible to treat the original symptom.

It may not be possible to recognize the cause of your hypertension unless other symptoms are present. Secondary hypertension accounts for a small number of hypertension causes, and without other symptoms, the doctor may not be aware that another condition is causing your symptoms.

Malignant Hypertension

With malignant hypertension, high blood pressure occurs suddenly and drastically. A person might experience numbness in the body as well as vision problems, extreme fatigue, confusion, anxiety, and seizures. Malignant hypertension is reversible when the underlying condition is cured. Malignant hypertension is very rare and affects both children and adults. Pregnant women are also at risk. Heart damage is a possibility with this type of hypertension.



Isolated Systolic Hypertension

This type of hypertension is a result of old age and a poor diet. The arteries become stiff, resulting in a high systolic number with a normal diastolic number. Isolated systolic hypertension does not have an identifiable cause. Risk factors include old age, obesity, using tobacco products, and having diabetes. Caucasian and black men are the groups that are highest at risk for developing this type of hypertension.

White Coat Hypertension

This type of hypertension occurs only when blood pressure is taken in a clinical setting. Outside of a doctor's office, blood pressure is normal. It is believed that these patients feel extremely stressed when they visit a clinic or doctor's office. You might want to try checking your blood pressure in other locations such as your home.

Resistant Hypertension

This type of hypertension is unresponsive to strong medications. In any case, treatments for resistant hypertension have been developed to keep the condition under control. Hypertension is called resistant if three medications fail to successfully treat the condition. At least four medications may be necessary to treat resistant hypertension.

Hypertension Tests & Diagnosis

Questionnaires

Your doctor will ask you a series of questions about your personal and family medical history, especially if your blood pressure is high. For the most part, a doctor will ask these questions as part of a routine physical exam. You may need to fill out a form with your symptoms, personal medical history, and family medical history, and if the doctor notices any abnormalities, you will be asked to explain your symptoms. The doctor may ask you follow up questions about your diet, activity levels, experiences with stress, and lifestyle.

Physical Exams

Medical professionals recommend that people visit the doctor for a routine physical at least once a year. During this doctor's visit, you will undergo a comprehensive exam that includes tests and examinations that are used to diagnose a variety of conditions.

Your doctor may be unable to diagnose your blood pressure based on one office visit. If your blood pressure is high, the doctor may ask you follow up questions to determine whether you have a family history of high blood pressure or whether you are experiencing additional symptoms such as dizziness, fatigue, or nausea. Your blood pressure may be mildly, moderately, or severely high, and the course of action that your doctor takes will depend on the numbers.

You may need to come back to the doctor's office several times over period of weeks for follow up blood pressure tests. The blood pressure measurements need to be repeated in order to show accurate results.

If your blood pressure is very high or if the doctor suspects that hypertension might be a possibility, then additional tests may be necessary to check the condition of your

organs including your heart and kidneys. You may need to undergo a urinalysis, ultrasound, or echocardiogram.

Blood Pressure Test

A medical professional will perform a blood pressure test as part of a routine physical exam. You may notice this test every time you visit a doctor. The person measuring your blood pressure will put a cuff on the upper part of your arm. This cuff is operated manually or by a machine. When inflated, this cuff blocks the flow of blood through the artery. The person measuring the blood pressure can listen to the pulse in the elbow, which will appear and disappear. Using this technique, it is possible to gauge systolic pressure and diastolic pressure. Blood pressure monitoring kits can automate this process.



In general, automatic machines provide more reliable and accurate results than manual readings. There are several other procedures that can ensure accuracy. An accurate diagnosis of hypertension requires three separate measurements that are spaced one week apart. Consistent high blood pressure means that the patient has hypertension.

Blood pressure should be taken at least one hour after caffeine consumption, one hour after smoking or exercise, and without any adrenergic stimulants in the system. The patient must be sitting upright for at least five minutes before blood pressure is taken. Blood pressure should also be measured at the same time.

The blood pressure test must be repeated multiple times over a period of multiple weeks in order to confirm a diagnosis for hypertension. The doctor might ask you to visit a medical center or hospital to undergo tests with a medical professional, or you may need to monitor your blood pressure using an automatic at-home kit from the drugstore.

Home Blood Pressure Kits

Home blood pressure monitoring kits are available to measure blood pressure throughout the day. Many of these kits are portable, so you can see how different activities and situations such as exercise and work affect your blood pressure. A doctor might ask you to keep a log of your blood pressure. Monitoring blood pressure throughout the day at specific times can give doctors a more accurate representation of how high blood pressure affects you. Your blood pressure patterns may also shed insight into whether you have a more serious underlying condition.

Additional Tests

If you have high blood pressure, a doctor might prescribe additional tests such as an echocardiogram, urinalysis, and ultrasound. These tests can help diagnose additional problems with the heart, kidneys, and eyes. These tests can also assess whether the hypertension has caused any permanent damage.

Hypertension Prevention & Treatment

How to Prevent Against This

Some people can effectively prevent hypertension through lifestyle modifications and behavioral changes. By reducing stress, quitting smoking, limiting alcohol use, and following a well-balanced diet, you may be able to effectively lower your blood pressure and keep it stable at a normal level.

If you are overweight, you may be able to lower your blood pressure by reducing your body weight. Many people notice a dramatic change in their blood pressure when they lose weight. By staying within a healthy weight range, you also limit possibilities of developing additional complications such as heart disease and strokes.

Maintaining a regular aerobic exercise routine can also have positive effects on blood pressure. Exercise does not necessarily need to be high intensity. Even walking can improve blood flow enough to control high blood pressure. Exercise will help you control stress, stay in shape, and feel good, overall. You will also limit the potential for developing additional complications such as high cholesterol, high blood pressure, and diabetes - all conditions that are exacerbated by hypertension.



Relaxation techniques can help reduce stress. Common practices include mind/body relaxation and controlled breathing. Lowering the lights and quieting loud sounds can help facilitate relaxation in order to reduce stress.

In general, it is important to maintain records of your blood pressure. If you catch hypertension early, you can take efforts to prevent future complications. For many people, hypertension creates no symptoms until the condition becomes severe. However, most people are unaware that they have hypertension until they start noticing symptoms. By catching symptoms early, you can start treating the condition before it becomes a problem.

Diet Tips

If you have a family or personal history of hypertension, a doctor might decide to put you on a high blood pressure diet as part of a preventative effort or treatment plan. A high blood pressure diet should be customized for the needs of the specific individual since patients may have a variety of health conditions. Here are some tips to help plan your high blood pressure diet:

- Reduce sugar intake. You do not want to develop high blood sugar or diabetes in conjunction with your hypertension. The resulting problems could be very dangerous.
- Reduce sodium intake as much as possible. You can even consider using a substitute for salt. When using a salt substitute, you should make sure that there are no safety warnings or manufacturer recalls. Many of these products are available at your local drugstore or grocery store.
- A diet that is low in saturated fat can help treat hypertension.

- Lower tobacco consumption by quitting smoking. Smoking does not necessarily cause hypertension, but when coupled with hypertension, smoking can cause additional complications such as heart disease, heart attacks, and strokes.
- Limit alcohol intake. When you do drink, make sure that you drink plenty of water to stay hydrated. Dehydrated can cause your hypertension symptoms to become worse.
- The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute has found that the DASH diet (dietary approaches to stop hypertension) can help lower blood pressure. This diet includes fruits, vegetables, and foods that are low in fat or fat-free.
- Eat foods that are low in cholesterol. By keeping your cholesterol numbers normal, you eliminate another risk factor for heart attacks, heart disease, and stroke.

If diet and lifestyle changes do not effectively control your high blood pressure, then you may need to take a daily medication to keep your blood pressure under control.

Treatment & Relief Methods

In general, doctors will encourage hypertension patients to adopt lifestyle changes before taking prescription medications. Patients might benefit from adopting the DASH diet or by increasing exercise. Generally, these relief methods are most effective when blood pressure is slightly high.

Some patients will need to start medications. Some doctors advocate prescribing medications based on thresholds or guidelines.

Doctors may choose to monitor the effects of lifestyle changes and dietary adjustments using biofeedback devices. These biofeedback devices can help doctors develop ideal and customized dosage levels.

Medications that are used to control hypertension include ACE inhibitors, angiotensin II receptor antagonists, calcium channel blockers, and diuretics.

A doctor may choose to prescribe one drug or a combination of drugs. A doctor will closely monitor patients who use prescription medicines.



10 Best Foods for Lowering Blood Pressure

When diagnosed with high blood pressure, most individuals are given strict orders to improve their diet and start exercising. When blood pressure is very high, the doctor may wish to start the patient on blood pressure-lowering medications. While eating healthy can help lower blood pressure over time, there are specific foods you can eat that will target high blood pressure and may quickly reverse the condition. Eating these foods will have the added benefit of aiding in weight loss, which in turn, will help lower blood pressure as well.

Whole Grains

Whole grains are grains that are still completely intact and have not undergone a refining process to remove the bran and germ components. Whole grains retain the entire grain kernel, making them higher in fiber and other nutrients than refined grains. One of the many health benefits associated with whole grains is a decrease in blood pressure. The high level of potassium and magnesium in whole grains is linked to lower blood pressure. Whole grains are believed to help with weight control because they keep you feeling full for a longer period of time. Examples of whole grain foods that are recommended for lowering blood pressure are

oatmeal or oat bran muffins for breakfast, and healthy sandwiches made on whole grain bread for lunch.



Low-Fat Dairy

Dairy products are high in both calcium and vitamin D. These two nutrients boost each other's health benefit and are more powerful at lowering blood pressure when consumed together. Calcium is not just recommended for children. Adults still need to maintain adequate calcium levels, and a calcium deficiency can increase the risk of developing high blood pressure. Eating dairy products that are low in fat, such as skim milk or fat-free yogurt, can help lower blood pressure significantly. To incorporate low-fat dairy into your meals, add skim milk to whole grain cereals for breakfast. For a healthy snack, add some fresh fruit and granola to a cup of fat-free yogurt.



Spinach

Chock full of magnesium and folate, spinach is a powerful tool in the fight against high blood pressure. Not only can magnesium help lower blood pressure, but consuming it on a regular basis can help maintain healthy blood pressure and keep the number in check. Spinach is also a great choice for maintaining a healthy weight because it is so low in calories. Whether fresh, pre-packaged or frozen, spinach can be added to your diet in a variety of ways. For breakfast, add some fresh spinach leaves to an egg white and turkey wrap. Add fresh or packaged spinach leaves to just about any lunch salad and replace lettuce on sandwiches with fresh spinach leaves

Toss some spinach leaves with other fresh veggies and add them to pasta dishes for a healthy dinner entree.



Nuts, Seeds and Beans

Also full of magnesium, unsalted sunflower seeds and other nuts are key ingredients in the fight against high blood pressure. Be sure to stay away from any salted varieties, as they are higher in sodium, a known risk factor for high blood pressure. Beans, including soybeans, are also high in potassium and fiber, and the combination of nutrients found in beans make them an excellent dietary choice for treating high blood pressure naturally. Nuts, seeds and beans can all easily be added to salads, soups and sandwiches. Edamame, soybeans that are still in the pod, can be boiled in minutes and taste great eaten straight out of the pod.



Bananas

Known for being an excellent source of potassium, bananas can significantly impact blood pressure levels. When potassium levels in the body dip below recommended levels, the body will hang onto sodium, which in turn will raise blood pressure. Conversely, when potassium levels are high, the body will release stores of sodium, and lower blood pressure along with it. Eating bananas is a quick and easy way to keep potassium and sodium levels in a proper balance. Add sliced bananas to whole grain cereal or oatmeal for a heart healthy breakfast. For a healthy mid-day snack, add top whole grain bread with some peanut butter and banana slices or add frozen bananas to a fresh fruit and fat-free yogurt smoothie.



Baked Potatoes

Potatoes have gotten some bad press over the years. Known for being high in carbs, many people avoid this white vegetable for fear of gaining weight. If consumed in the proper context and properly prepared, potatoes can be a nutritious addition to a healthy diet plan. Potatoes are fat-free and cholesterol-free, and are a rich source of magnesium and fiber. Much like bananas, baked potatoes pack a whopping punch of potassium into every serving. Eating baked potatoes can help lower blood pressure by helping to keep potassium levels high and sodium levels low. Enjoy baked potatoes alone, or with a spoonful of fat-free sour cream. For added flavor, add some fresh minced garlic or freshly chopped chives.



Dark Chocolate

Dark chocolate is gaining recognition in the world of health food. Unlike milk chocolate, dark chocolate is very high in antioxidants and vital nutrients. Just one ½ ounce serving of dark chocolate a day may help to bring blood pressure levels back down to the normal range. Although the connection between dark chocolate and lower blood pressure has not been established, it is believed that the antioxidants in the chocolate can help eliminate free radicals in the body, thereby improving overall heart health. It is important that only a small amount of chocolate should be eaten each day, as it is a high calorie food that can lead to weight gain if too much is consumed. Nibble on dark chocolate bars or try grating some chocolate shavings over fat-free yogurt, fat-free ice cream or your favorite cup of decaffeinated tea.



Salmon

Salmon is an excellent lean protein choice that can help lower blood pressure numbers. In addition to being high in protein, salmon contains a large amount of vitamin D. Salmon is also low in fat, and the fats that are present are the healthy kind. To maintain all of the health benefits of Salmon, it is important to remember to select healthy preparation techniques such as grilling, broiling or baking. Add flavor without adding sodium by brushing on some olive oil and adding a sprinkling of black pepper.



Green Tea



Though there are not a lot of studies to prove the theory, many natural health practitioners recommend drinking green tea to help lower blood pressure. Not only is it believed to help lower blood pressure, but there are some promising studies that suggest regular consumption of green tea can help keep blood pressure levels in the normal range. The theory is that the polyphenols in tea are high in antioxidants that help protect the heart and fight off free radicals that can elevate blood. Try a cup of hot green tea in place of your morning coffee. Because green tea is low in caffeine, enjoy a cup after dinner to help unwind.

Avocados

Much like potatoes, in the past, avocados were labeled as a high fat food to avoid. Avocados are high in monounsaturated fat, which is the healthy fat that we all should be consuming in moderation. Heart healthy monounsaturated fats are high in antioxidants and nutrients such as vitamin B6, magnesium and folic acid. Another surprising fact most people don't know is that avocados contain more potassium than bananas. This combination of nutrients is what makes avocados a healthy blood pressure lowering food. Add fresh avocado slices to salads, sandwiches and wraps. Mash up some avocados and add some fresh diced tomatoes, fresh chopped garlic and a splash of fresh lime juice to make a healthy guacamole dip.



10 Tips for Lowering Blood Pressure Naturally

Being diagnosed with high blood pressure can be scary. Many individuals worry about the effects high blood pressure will have on their bodies and if they will have to rely on blood pressure lowering medication for the rest of their lives. High blood pressure is a preventable disease, and there are ways to help lower blood pressure naturally. Even if you have been prescribed medication, you can make lifestyle changes that can work with the medication to lower your blood pressure significantly. Many individuals who make these changes find that they can eventually come off of blood pressure lowering medication altogether.

Lose Excess Weight

This is an indirect correlation between excess weight gain and an increase in blood pressure. By taking the steps necessary to lose weight, you can help lower your blood pressure naturally. Even a small weight loss of only 5 to 10 pounds can have a positive effect on your overall numbers. As you continue to lose weight, you can expect to see your blood pressure continue to drop. There is some evidence that blood pressure lowering medication works even better when you lose weight, making this step one of the most important you can take to fight high blood pressure.

Get Active

A sedentary lifestyle plays a big role in the onset of high blood pressure. Incorporating an exercise routine into your daily life is a great way to get active. When you exercise, your heart becomes more efficient at utilizing oxygen and uses less energy to pump blood. When your heart isn't struggling to pump blood, it can result in lower blood pressure. After just a few weeks of exercise you can expect to see your numbers drop. As with any medical condition, individuals with high blood pressure should speak with their physician before starting any exercise program.

Eat Healthy Foods

Eliminate unhealthy fats and high cholesterol foods from your diet to improve your overall heart health. Not only will eating healthy foods help to lose weight, but certain healthy foods can also target high blood pressure. Eat foods that directly impact high blood pressure, such as whole grains, low-fat dairy products and fresh fruits and vegetables. Known as the DASH diet (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension), these foods are low in sodium and easy on the waistline. Foods that are high in potassium, such as bananas, cantaloupes, avocados and baked potatoes, help to rid the body of sodium with their diuretic effect.

Reduce Sodium

There are dozens of seemingly healthy foods that are actually hidden sources of sodium. And most people are unaware of just how much sodium is in the foods we eat. One teaspoon of salt contains a whopping 2,400 mg of sodium. When attempting to lower high blood pressure, it is important to pay attention to the sodium levels in everything you eat. Always check food labels. Prepare meals with salt-free seasonings and purchase reduced-sodium packaged foods. Reducing your sodium intake by just a small amount can significantly lower your blood pressure.

Limit Alcohol

There are differing opinions on the effect of alcohol on blood pressure and overall health in general. While some research suggests that complete avoidance is the way to go, there are numerous studies that suggest that mild to moderate consumption can have a positive effect on heart health and possibly lower blood pressure. Regardless of which side of the coin you are on, the overall message is that if you're going to drink, do so in moderation. Consuming too much alcohol will have a negative impact on your blood pressure, not to mention your liver and your health in general. If you do not normally consume alcohol, so not start now in an attempt to lower your blood pressure. If you do drink, make sure you limit your consumption to no more than 1 drink per day for women, 2 for men.

Quit Smoking

Virtually everyone knows that smoking is bad for your health. Though most commonly known for the negative effects smoking has on the lungs, smoking also has a negative impact on blood pressure. The nicotine found in tobacco can elevate your blood pressure immediately after smoking, with the effect lasting for up to an hour. Given that many people who smoke do so at least once per hour, it stands to reason that your blood pressure will remain elevated throughout the day. Whether you need to stop cold turkey, wean off slowly or enlist the help of smoking cessation aids, find a method that works for you and quit altogether.

Reduce Caffeine Intake

This is another topic that is up for debate. Some studies suggest that caffeine has no effect on blood pressure. Still, other research suggests that caffeine intake is associated with increased incidence of high blood pressure in individuals who consume more than 2 cups per day. The theory is that caffeine tightens the blood vessels, which elevates stress levels and send blood pressure skyrocketing over time. This doesn't mean you have to give up coffee, just that you should consider replacing coffee and any other caffeinated beverages for their non-caffeinated counterparts.

Meditate

There are many different types of meditation. When it comes to lowering blood pressure, it doesn't matter which type you choose. The main goal is to engage in deep breathing exercises that reduce stress and invoke an overall calming effect on the body. Stress hormones are linked to a raise in blood pressure. Lowering those hormone levels is a key factor in lowering blood pressure along with it. Deep breathing exercises help to release tension in the muscles, reduce negative thoughts and emotions and calm both the mind and body. All of this is believed to have a positive effect on high blood pressure.

Schedule Regular Check-Ups

Monitoring your blood pressure at home, though important, does not replace the need for regular physical exams. During regular check-ups, your doctor will continue to monitor your blood pressure and answer any questions you may have. He or she will discuss your lifestyle changes and help determine what techniques are working and what may need to be modified to improve results. If you are taking blood pressure lowering medication, the dosage may need to be lowered as you incorporate healthy lifestyle changes that help bring your level down.

Listen to Classical Music

Similar to meditation, listening to classical music can have a calming effect that can help to lower high blood pressure. Classical music can help ease tension and reduce stress. Classical music can be used alone or combined with meditation and deep breathing techniques. Try listening to a classical music CD when commuting to and from work or when trying to unwind before bed.

Salty Shockers! 10 Foods Surprisingly High In Sodium

Did you know that most Americans eat one and a half times more salt than the recommended limit for sodium each day? Excessive sodium intake is a serious health issue, and one that needs to be remedied. One of the biggest problems with high sodium intake is that the foods we eat already contain high levels of salt. Contrary to popular belief, it's the sodium already in food that's the bigger culprit, not the salt we add during cooking or at the table.

We all know processed meats, cheeses and restaurants foods contain tons of sodium. But some of the worst offenders for high sodium content may come as a surprise. We've put together a list of the high-sodium foods that may surprise you. Make sure you limit how much of these foods you consume or avoid them altogether to help protect your health.

Blended Coffee Drinks

Your iced coffee drink may taste sweet, but it's actually packed with lots of sodium. One 16 oz. Coffee Frappuccino at Starbucks has a whopping 220 mg of sodium. Go for less complicated drinks with fewer ingredients, like a simple iced coffee with milk, to knock down your sodium intake.



Chocolate Milk



Like blended coffee drinks, chocolate milk is another sweet treat that's actually sodium-rich. The salt is there to preserve the shelf life of the product, but it's bad for your health. Read labels to choose a healthier option or make your own chocolate milk at home with low-sodium products.

Tomato Sauce

Many of the tomato sauces you find on the shelves may make great claims on their labels about their health benefits. Despite how good tomatoes are for you, these sauces also tend to have way too much sodium. Just ¼ cup of Hunt's Canned Tomato Sauce has 410 mg of sodium. Look for no-salt-added version of your favorite brands to cut back on the sodium in your sauce.



Canned Vegetables

Like tomato sauce, getting canned veggies seems like a healthy choice but can contain hidden high sodium levels. Just ½ cup of canned Green Giant green beans has 400 mg of sodium. If possible, pick up frozen veggies instead – Green Giant’s Fresh Steamers frozen green beans have 0 mg of sodium.



Cereal



This breakfast treat may seem like a healthy option, especially if you make sure to get one without lots of sugar. However, many people overlook the fact that even some of the healthy cereals contain lots of sodium. For example, one cup of Fiber One’s Honey Clusters cereal contains 230 mg of sodium. There are low-sodium options available if you take time to read the label. Get this – Fiber One’s Frosted Shredded Wheat doesn’t contain any sodium at all!

Bagels

You thought the reason bagels weren’t the healthiest choice had to do with carbs, didn’t you? However, the typical plain bagel (no cream cheese and no flavoring) also has 500 mg of sodium. If you want some kind of bread for breakfast, grab an English muffin instead – it has just 180 mg of sodium.



Wheat Crackers



These are often touted as a healthy snack option, but wheat crackers aren’t much better than potato chips when it comes to sodium content. One serving can have over 300 mg of sodium. Choose a low-sodium cracker for snacking instead.

Flavored Rice

Watch out for those prepackaged rice products and packets of rice seasoning. Both tend to be laden with tons of sodium. Some of the heat-and-eat rice products have over 700 mg of sodium per cup. It’s always healthier to make your own rice at home and season it with herbs and spices.



Salad Dressing



You’ve made a great healthy choice by getting a salad – don’t spoil it by adding a sodium-heavy dressing on top. Many salad dressings have over 150 mg of sodium in a single tablespoon. Make your own dressings at home for a healthier option, or read labels to find a low-sodium alternative.

Instant Noodles



Not many people realize, but instant noodles are terrible as far as nutritional value is concerned. In fact, many experts consider them junk food. But what's so bad about them? For that answer, just take one look at the sodium on the package's nutrition label. Many of these instant noodle cups and packages contain around 1,000mg of sodium! That's almost an entire day's worth in a measly little meal.

8 Ways to Reduce Sodium Intake in Your Daily Diet

While consuming sodium is not necessarily a bad thing, the problem for most Americans is that they're consuming far too much than they actually need. According to the National Heart Lung and Blood Institute (NHLBI), the average person should be consuming less than 2.4 grams per day, which equates to 2,400 milligrams (mg). To put it simply, that's 1 teaspoon of normal table salt... per day, not per meal. If you think you're consuming more than the recommended daily allowance of sodium, use this guide to cut down your daily intake.

Sodium And The Human Body

Sodium is a chemical element that occurs naturally in many foods and is needed by the body for proper function. Normal table salt is a mixture of sodium and chlorine. Here are some important facts about sodium and its relation to the human body:

- The kidneys are responsible for controlling the amount of sodium in the body.
- Sodium is needed for the nerves and muscles to function properly.
- The balance of fluids within the body is affected by the amount of sodium present. In other words, sodium helps regulate a person's fluid balance.
- Consuming too much sodium will lead to excess amounts that the kidneys cannot process. This causes a build-up of sodium within the blood, which can lead to a host of medical issues like high blood pressure.

If you suffer from high blood pressure, or you must control your sodium levels due to a medical condition like kidney diseases or congestive heart failure, here are 10 ways to reduce sodium intake in your daily diet:

Watch The Sodium In Your Vegetables

When you go out shopping for vegetables, make sure you are buying the variety that does not have any salt added. Whether they are fresh, frozen or canned, it is important to look for any indication that salt has been added. If possible, look specifically for produce items that feature a "no salt added" label or any other label along those lines.

Drain And Rinse Canned Foods

Certain canned foods like Vienna sausage or tuna may contain excess sodium from the liquid they are packaged in. Before using or consuming these and other similar canned products, make sure you drain any fluids from the can before serving. You can even lightly rinse these canned foods to remove more sodium.

Be Careful When Consuming “Quick” Foods

Quick foods or meals include microwavable snacks and meals, canned soups and other ready-to-eat foods that require little to no preparation. Unlike a home cooked meal where you can control the amount of sodium used in preparation, these quick foods often contain an excess of sodium. Try to avoid these types of foods if possible, or opt for lighter versions that have less sodium.

Read The Nutrition Labels Properly

Make sure you know how to properly read nutrition labels to avoid consuming too much sodium per day. Certain foods are known for containing nearly an entire day’s worth of sodium in one serving. Always read the nutrition labels properly, and make sure you are noting the serving size indicated in the nutritional information.

Start Using A Variety Of Herbs And Spices

Salt and salt-based seasoning is one of the main reasons why people are consuming too much sodium each day. While it is a simple, affordable way of making a meal tastier, it’s not very healthy. Look into other herbs and spices you can use to give your meals more flavor, and shop specifically for salt-free seasonings at the grocery.

Try To Avoid Canned Or Processed Meats, Fish And Poultry

When shopping for meats, fish or poultry, the fresh variety is always the preferred choice when trying to reduce your sodium intake. The processed and canned varieties tend to include excess sodium. Coupled with the salt that people tend to use while cooking, the sodium content of one dish is nearly doubled.

Look For Labels That Indicate Reduced Sodium

When shopping for snacks or food items, look for any reduced sodium options. Key words and labels to scan on the packaging include:

- Low sodium
- Reduced sodium
- Light
- Light sodium
- Unsalted

Make sure you also read the nutritional information on the packaging to determine the amount of sodium you’re consuming per serving.

Sodium Does Not Mean “Salty”

People often consider salty as being synonymous with sodium. However, there are certain foods, sauces, drinks and other consumables that contain sodium that lack the salty taste. For example, a chocolate chip cookie may taste sweet, but can also have a high sodium content without being salty at all. Another example is the sodium contents of ketchup. Just be mindful that there could be sodium in about anything you consume, even if it lacks a salty taste.

Top Foods to Avoid with High Blood Pressure

Pickles



Pickles are low calorie, which is great, but they are loaded with sodium. One medium pickle (about 5 inches long) can have around 570 mg of sodium. That's over 1/3 of your sodium limit (2300 mg) for the day!

Canned Chicken Noodle Soup

Chicken noodle soup is often considered a comfort food, but it is not so comforting to know that there can be up to 880 mg of sodium in a one cup serving.



Sauerkraut



It's low calorie and a great way to add vegetables to a bratwurst, right? Nope. A half cup may only have about 13 calories, but it also has over 460 mg of sodium.

Fast Food French Fries

While many fast food chains are now frying their fries in trans-fat free oil, not all of them are. Regardless, French fries still provide a large dose of fat and sodium. A medium serving of fries has about 19 grams of fat and 270 mg of sodium.



Bacon



Bacon is mostly fat. Three slices have 4.5 grams of fat and about 270 mg of sodium. Opt for lower sodium varieties and try turkey bacon instead of pork. Even with these switches bacon should remain a "special treat", not an everyday indulgence.

Whole Milk

Dairy is a great source of calcium, but high fat dairy sources, like whole milk, provide more fat than you need. A one cup serving of whole milk provides 8 grams of fat, 5 of which are saturated. Saturated fats are worse for you than other types and have been linked to heart disease. Try using 2% milk, or even better - 1% or skim.



Frozen Pot Pies



A single pot pie equals a serving of about 1300-1400 mg of sodium PLUS about 35 g of fat! Keep in mind that this is over 50% of your daily recommended values for both. The fat also includes trans-fat, which you want to eliminate from your diet completely, and an unhealthy dose of saturated fat. Clear out your freezer!

Donuts

Donuts may be popular, but they sure aren't very good for your health and body. Just one donut packs in 200 calories with 12 grams of fat.



Ramen Noodles



Ramen noodles are popular among college students, but they are not a healthy meal. One package of Ramen noodles adds 14 grams of fat to your day AND 1580 MG of sodium! Interestingly, it is actually the flavor packet that contains most of that sodium.

Margarine

Margarine is not necessarily bad. You just have to make sure to pick the kind with no trans-fats. Read the label closely. It is important for your health to avoid trans-fats all together. Use Smart Balance whenever available.



Sugar



Foods with extra calories and full of sugar cause you to gain weight. Obesity is a significant determinant for high blood pressure. The extra weight puts surplus strain on the heart and slows down the blood flow.

Alcohol

Alcohol consumption actively causes the blood pressure to elevate. It also damages the walls of the blood vessels, while simultaneously increases risks of further complications.



Red Meat



A healthy eating plan should include only a small amount (if any) of saturated or trans-fats. Fatty foods are bad for both the heart and blood vessels. Avoid red meat and fast food along with other fats that include hydrogenated oils.

Table Salt

Too much sodium does direct damage to the heart and arteries and raises blood pressure significantly.



Top 5 Myths about High Blood Pressure

Myth #1: Normal blood pressure is anything below 140/90 mmHg

The most recent National Health, Lung, and Blood Institute guidelines set systolic BP of less than 120mmHg and diastolic BP of less than 80mmHg (i.e. less than 120/80) as normal. This is significantly different than the old standard of 140/90 your doctor may still be using.

Myth #2: If you have high blood pressure, you need prescription drugs to lower it

There are many non-prescription blood pressure lowering treatments that are equally as powerful as drugs and offer one huge benefit that drugs alone do not. The fact is many natural treatments are equally effective as compared to drugs, especially when used in combination.

Myth #3: Men are the only ones who need to worry about high blood pressure

Unfortunately, the very opposite is true. High blood pressure affects men, women and children, young and old.

Myth #4: Salt is the main cause of high blood pressure

While table salt and sodium found in soup, processed meats and frozen foods, can raise blood pressure, there are many other factors that increase the risk of high blood pressure, including family history, age, obesity and diet, certain diseases, among others.

Myth #5: You will always have physical symptoms of high blood pressure

High blood pressure is a silent disease and can strike without presenting any symptoms whatsoever. This is why everyone is encouraged to get regular checkups, watch their diet and make exercise a priority. A healthy lifestyle is the best defense against high blood pressure and hypertension.

Using the DASH Diet for High Blood Pressure

In the dawn of so many new diets, the DASH eating plan probably sounds like another fad diet that will die out in a year or two. However, the DASH diet has been endorsed and promoted by many physicians as an effective and healthy eating pattern for the prevention of high blood pressure, heart attacks, heart disease, stroke and other cardiovascular-related diseases.

What Is The DASH Diet?

DASH stands for “Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension,” and focuses on several general guidelines when choosing foods:

- Low sodium
- Little or no added sugars
- Fat free and/or low fat dairy products
- Colorful and diverse fruits and vegetables
- Whole grains
- Lean meats, poultry, and fish
- Nuts, seeds, and legumes



Publications applaud the DASH eating plan for its high adaptability for gluten-free or vegetarian recipes, as well as the variety of food choices it employs. There is no need to shop at specialty stores since all ingredients are easily accessible at the local market.

The DASH diet consists of certain number of daily servings from various food groups based on the individual's needs. Usually, plans are grouped based on the number of calories and the amount of sodium allowed per day. The eating plan is also often employed in congruent with lifestyle changes to maximize its effects. Since each person's health conditions and desired goals are different, it is best to consult a doctor on the most appropriate DASH eating plan.

Other Benefits

The DASH diet has been recently named as one of the best overall diets by US News and World Report. Rich in potassium, magnesium, calcium, protein and fiber, this eating plan has other powerful health benefits in addition to lowering blood pressure and warding off cardiovascular related diseases. Some additional benefits include:

- Preventing obesity (when combined with regular exercise)
- Preventing osteoporosis (due to increased calcium intake)
- Preventing cancer (due to increased antioxidant intake)
- Preventing diabetes (due to lowered sugar intake)
- Preventing constipation (due to increased fiber intake)
- Losing weight (due to a healthier and more nutritious eating plan)

Individuals who are not at risk of health complications may also partake in the DASH diet as an effective preventative measure, or to establish healthier eating habits for life. It is never too late to start being proactive about your health!

Tips To Incorporate DASH In Your Diet

While the DASH diet is best planned by your physician after consultation to fit your specific needs and body condition, it may be hard to constantly follow the plan exactly as it is. Here are some tips that can help you stay within the DASH guidelines when choosing your foods.

For low sodium and no added sugars:

- Opt for unprocessed foods over processed. Basically, try to avoid anything that comes in a pre-packaged box.
- Use fresh fruits to satisfy a sweet tooth instead of baked goods or sugary sweets.
- Add other spices in place of salt for the same "oomph" in flavor.
- For frozen or canned foods, always choose the low sodium varieties. When possible, discard the packaging liquids and rinse the food items to remove excess sodium or sugars.
- Cook more often instead of eating out. That way, you will have more control over the amount of sodium in the dishes.
- Combine self-squeezed fruit juices (no added sugars, of course) with carbonated water for a healthy soda substitute.

For Diverse Produce:

- Look for rich bursts of color when grocery shopping. For example, rather than choosing pale lettuce, opt for deep green spinach.
- Eat one item from each of the rainbow spectrum every day. Get creative! For example, apples (red), pumpkins (orange), bell peppers (yellow), kale (green), blueberry (blue), eggplant (purple).
- Don't have time to constantly shop for fresh fruits and vegetables? Stock up on the frozen variety to save time.
- A vegetable or fruit smoothie can be a convenient way to intake all the proper nutrients in one go.
- Pureed produce can be deliciously easily hidden in dishes for the veggie hater. For example, substitute oil with applesauce in baked goods, or add pureed vegetables in pasta sauces and lasagnas. They will never know!

For Nuts, Seeds, and Legumes:

- Nut butters serve as a tasty snack on the go. Try it with celery and apples. Just be sure to watch the serving size to avoid excessive calories.
- Throw some seeds into your next blended smoothie. You will never notice the difference!
- Dried legumes, such as peas or soybeans, make tasty additions to your usual trail mix.
- Try adding nuts and seeds with your breakfast cereal or yogurt for a change instead of granola.

High Cholesterol - 10 Most Common Cholesterol Myths

In the last few decades, quite a fuss has been made about how bad cholesterol is, but some of the "facts" that have been presented are misleading and in some cases untrue. These are some of the most common myths perpetuated about cholesterol.

Eggs Are Bad

For years, the myth has been perpetuated that eggs are bad, especially for those who already have high cholesterol. But recent research has proven this to be patently false. While it's true that eggs do contain cholesterol, the bad is outweighed by all the good. Eggs are an excellent, affordable source of protein that are rich in good fats. Research has also shown that the body compensates for the cholesterol that is consumed by producing less within the body.



Cholesterol-Free Means Healthy

Most people think that if a food label says that the product is cholesterol-free that it must be healthy. The truth is that the dietary cholesterol found in foods is the least important indicator of how healthy a food actually is. What is most important? The amount of fat, particularly saturated fat and trans-fat. These two fats seem to play the largest role in the development of atherosclerosis, a dangerous condition that can be deadly if left untreated.

The Lower Your Cholesterol, The Better

It's a commonly held belief that the lower a person's cholesterol is the healthier they are. This is patently false. While low levels of LDL cholesterol have typically been considered healthy, health officials and experts are reconsidering. In fact, several studies have found that those with low LDL (low-density lipoprotein, the "bad" cholesterol) seem to have a higher risk of developing cancer. This has led some researchers to question whether or not the drugs used to lower cholesterol are causing other problems.

Kids Are Immune To High Cholesterol

This is false. A child's body works the same way that an adult's body does. If that child consumes large amounts of saturated fat and trans fat (fried chicken nuggets and french fries, anyone?) that child can indeed develop high cholesterol. In fact, research shows that atherosclerosis, the narrowing and hardening of arteries that often leads to heart disease, can develop in children as early as age 8. The good news for these children is that by changing their diet and increasing activity levels, they can usually avoid cholesterol medication.

All Cholesterol Is Bad

The fact is that the body needs a certain amount of cholesterol to survive. Cholesterol is produced in the human body by the liver to support the body's cholesterol needs. However cholesterol is carried in the body by lipoproteins and some of these are bad. These lipoproteins fall into one of two categories. The first is HDL, or high-density lipoproteins, which are also called "good cholesterol". The second is LDL, or low density lipoproteins, which are known as the "bad cholesterol". It is the LDL cholesterol which causes atherosclerosis and heart disease, but the HDL cholesterol is what you want more of.

Triglycerides Signal an Impending Heart Attack

Triglycerides are a type of fat in the blood and while a high fat diet does contribute to heart disease, high triglycerides are actually a sign of another impending problem: diabetes. Triglycerides don't invade the lining of the walls of arteries so they don't cause heart attacks in the same sense that LDL does. High triglycerides are a warning sign of metabolic syndrome, which are a group of conditions that can contribute to coronary heart disease and stroke.

Cholesterol Drugs Are Magic, Cure-All Pills

Unfortunately there is no such thing as a magic pill that's going to cure everything. And cholesterol drugs, in particular, can be a part of a sordid tale of doctors receiving monetary kickbacks from the companies that manufacture the drugs, leading to over prescribing, according to a report from the Huffington Post. Cholesterol drugs also come with a host of side effects and they may not even be needed in most cases, according to the report.

There Is No Way To Lower Cholesterol Naturally

Again, this is an assumption that most people make when presented with the option of cholesterol lowering medications. But the truth is that there are a lot of ways that people can maintain a healthy cholesterol level naturally. A healthy diet with plenty of fruits and vegetables, exercise and no smoking will go a long way. There are also natural alternatives to cholesterol drugs available that use healthy plant sterols that lower cholesterol.

High Cholesterol Is The Best Indicator For Heart Disease

This is a myth that has been perpetuated for decades. The truth is that high cholesterol is the least reliable indicator of overall cardiovascular health. One study found that about 75 percent of people who were hospitalized for a heart attack had LDL (bad) cholesterol levels that fell within the normal range. There are a number of possible reasons for this, including some skewed numbers on just how high is too high for cholesterol.

Americans Outrank The Rest Of The World

While the United States does have an obesity epidemic, giving rise to the popular notion that we are among the unhealthiest people in the world, Americans are far outranked by some other countries when it comes to cholesterol. American men come in 83rd among other nations, while American women come in 81st, according to Health magazine.

The portrayal of cholesterol within the media, in advertisements and even within our own daily conversations isn't entirely correct. Perhaps as people become more familiar with cholesterol and differentiating between myths and facts, they will be able to decrease their risk for heart disease. For starters, it's important to understand the difference between HDL and LDL cholesterol.

10 High Cholesterol Foods to Avoid

It's fairly well-known that there are two kinds of cholesterol – the “good” **HDL cholesterol** and the “bad” **LDL cholesterol**. Therefore, just because something is high in cholesterol doesn't clarify whether that food is good or bad for you. In this article, we set the record straight. The following are some of the foods that are highest in LDL cholesterol. Avoid these foods to help protect your health.

Ice Cream



Sadly, one of America's favorite desserts is loaded with unhealthy cholesterol. Some of the added ingredients in your favorite flavors – chocolate, fudge, caramel, etc. – can drive those numbers up even further. Instead of ice cream, go for sorbet, which is made with water rather than dairy or some fresh fruit mixed with yogurt. It's more refreshing and just as sweet. Another healthy alternative would be a low-fat frozen yogurt.

Rib-Eye Steak

This particular cut of meat is the worst offender in the cholesterol department. Even when the fat is well-trimmed and it's cooked in olive oil, a 3-ounce rib-eye steak accounts for 26 percent of the recommended cholesterol allowance per day, according to About.com. Meat lovers should opt for other cuts of meat, such as rump, round, tip, flank or tenderloin – to decrease their cholesterol count.



Cheeseburgers

Cheeseburgers tend to be especially bad for you in the cholesterol department. According to About.com, a plain cheeseburger with condiments and vegetables has about 52 milligrams (mg) of cholesterol. That doesn't seem like much, but imagine how much that number can increase when you double the meat and cheese in the popular double-cheeseburger options at so many fast food restaurants. Instead of a cheeseburger (particularly those of the fast-food variety), have a cheese-free burger made from grass-fed beef, which has a fatty acid ratio that is close to what is found in fish.



Lobster

While some types of seafood are good for your cholesterol levels, others are the opposite. Lobsters fall into the latter category due to the fact that 3 ounces of lobster contains about 61 mg of cholesterol. You can add a lot more to that number if you dip your lobster in butter, as most people do. If you do want to eat seafood, go for fish, scallops or oysters and make sure they are broiled rather than fried.



Fried Chicken



Chicken can be great for your health if you cook it the right way. Many people think that eating chicken is good for them even if it's fried. However, fried chicken or chicken with the skin still on has just as much cholesterol and fat as ice cream or a hamburger. When eating chicken, the healthier way to go is to choose skinless, white meat that has not been fried. Experiment with baking, braising, stir-fry and grilling chicken to make this meat just as appetizing as when it's fried.

Liver

Though it does have lots of iron, liver is also high in cholesterol. After all, cholesterol is made and stored in the liver, so it usually has the highest concentration of cholesterol in animal meats. This should be a careful indulgence for most due to the high cholesterol levels, and those with cholesterol problems should skip it altogether.



Mac And Cheese



Most dairy products aren't doing much to help your cholesterol intake. Traditional macaroni and cheese contains whole milk, butter and plenty of cheese, all of which contain a significant amount of cholesterol and saturated fats. If you still crave this comfort food, substitute 1 percent milk or evaporated milk for butter and whole milk, and use a low-fat cheese. These substitutions cut the fat and cholesterol content of the dish by more than half.

Muffins

Those large, plump and fluffy muffins overflowing their wrappers may be tempting, but they come at a cost – they're almost always loaded with fat and cholesterol. Instead of choosing a traditional muffin for breakfast, choose an English muffin (which usually has no saturated fat or cholesterol) or a low-fat bran muffin instead. You'll save on cholesterol and get a better start to your day.



Margarine

Although margarine was originally touted as the solution to butter's unhealthy qualities, it doesn't help when it comes to your cholesterol. Margarine is loaded with hydrogenated oils, trans-fat and saturated fat, which drive up your cholesterol levels. The best substitute for margarine is olive oil – try to do more of your cooking with this healthier oil. When you need a butter-like consistency, opt for whipped, reduced-fat or fat-free soft spreads.



Always take your personal health into account when making dietary decisions. The general guidelines from the American Heart Association indicate that your cholesterol intake should be less than 300 mg per day. If you have high cholesterol already, try reducing that number to 200 mg a day. Ask your doctor if you have any concerns about your cholesterol levels or your diet.

How to Reduce LDL Cholesterol Naturally

Though there are numerous cholesterol-lowering medications out there today, it's still a good idea for individuals to try to lower their cholesterol levels naturally. The key is to find methods which lower low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol, often referred to as the "bad" cholesterol. The following are some of the best techniques for lowering your LDL cholesterol naturally.

Avoid Saturated Fats

The first thing you need to adjust if you have high levels of LDL cholesterol is your diet. To begin with, you'll want to avoid foods that are high in saturated fats, like red meat, cheese and eggs. Instead, focus on eating a varied diet of healthy, unprocessed foods.

The following are some healthy foods you can eat for a low-cholesterol diet:

- Fish
- Whole grains
- Oats
- Fruits
- Vegetables
- Legumes
- Beans
- Garlic
- Olive oil
- Tea
- Red wine

Following these diet recommendations can make a significant impact on your health. U.S. News reports that one study found that a balanced diet was just as effective as a statin at reducing LDL cholesterol levels. If you need help forming a diet plan that works for you, speak with a doctor or a nutritionist who is familiar with your cholesterol issues.

Exercise Regularly

If you're suffering from high cholesterol levels, it's time to get back into a regular workout routine. At least 30 minutes a day five times a week is recommended, and you can vary between aerobic exercises like jogging or biking and strength-training exercises like push-ups, sit-ups and squats. The key here is to get your body moving on a regular basis and to push yourself a little bit more each time as your body becomes used to the routine.

Doing these exercises can lower your LDL cholesterol levels naturally and safely while creating a significant boost in your overall health. If you haven't been exercising recently, you can even start small with 10 minutes of exercise a day five times a week – just be sure to gradually build up the length of your workout over time.

Take Supplements

There are plenty of natural supplements you can try for lowering your cholesterol levels. In many cases, these supplements are very effective in reducing your LDL cholesterol. The following supplements are recommended for lowering LDL cholesterol in your body:

- **Multivitamin:** Make sure you're taking a multivitamin daily. Check the label carefully before you settle on a particular brand – your multivitamin of choice should include a minimum of 500 mcg of chromium, 2 mg of biotin and 400 mg of lipoic acid. Many of these types of multivitamins require taking three capsules twice a day, but check the label for instructions.
- **Omega-3s:** Omega-3 fats are also good for lowering LDL cholesterol. Take about 1000 mg of this supplement twice a day.
- **Vitamin D3:** There's no standard amount for a vitamin D3 supplement. In general, 2000 IU of vitamin D3 is considered the maximum. Ask a doctor to find out how much of this supplement you should take per day.
- **Red rice yeast:** This is helpful in keeping your cholesterol particles at a healthy size. Take about 1200 mg of red rice yeast supplements twice a day.

- **Glucosamin:** Generally, 2-4 capsules of this supplement can be taken about 15 minutes before each meal. Make sure to drink a glass of water whenever taking this medication.
- **Plant sterols:** Consider taking a broad-range, balanced concentration of plant sterols to help lower your LDL cholesterol naturally. One capsule of this supplement is typically taken with each meal.

Make sure you speak to your doctor before you begin taking any of the supplements listed here. When you do ask about cholesterol-lowering substances, be sure to mention any other medications you are taking as well.

Take Vitamin B3

Also known as niacin, vitamin B3 can be useful for raising your “good” cholesterol (high-density lipoproteins or HDL cholesterol). This is important because it is the HDL cholesterol which helps move LDL cholesterol out of the bloodstream and into the liver, where they are destroyed. U.S. News explains that niacin can actually raise HDL levels by 15 to 35 percent and lower LDL levels by around 20%.

Although it’s very effective, there are a few drawbacks to taking vitamin B3 for this purpose. First, it may raise blood sugar and cause flushing, and the risk for side effects increases when niacin is combined with a statin. Secondly, you’ll need to get a doctor’s prescription to get the high-dose capsules that are used for the purpose of lowering LDL cholesterol.

Many people will find that following the tips above can help them to significantly reduce their LDL cholesterol levels. If you are taking any cholesterol-lowering medications, make sure to ask your doctor about what other steps you can take to lower your cholesterol which will not cause harmful side effects or reactions with your medication.

10 Natural Ways to Lower Cholesterol

High cholesterol is a serious problem for one in six adults in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Although the body needs some cholesterol, when levels become too high, it puts a person at risk for a heart attack and stroke. Excess cholesterol in the body can stick to the walls of the arteries and block blood flow to the heart and brain. Although in some cases, medication may be recommended to lower levels, there are other things you can do to reduce your cholesterol.

Aerobic Exercise

There are two types of cholesterol in the body: **low density lipoprotein** (LDL), which is bad cholesterol. The other type of cholesterol is **high density lipoprotein** (HDL) and is actually good for you because it helps prevent heart disease. Aerobic exercise is a great weapon in battling cholesterol because it not only lowers bad cholesterol levels, but it can raise HDL levels. Aim for 30 to 60 minutes of some type of aerobic exercise on most days.

Consider Taking Certain Supplements

Although additional research is needed, taking certain supplements may help lower cholesterol levels. For instance, **fish oil** may lower triglyceride levels. In addition, garlic

supplements may reduce total cholesterol level. Keep in mind, supplements may have side effects, and you should always check with your doctor before adding them to your diet.

Eat Foods Containing Monounsaturated Fats

Although some fat is needed in your diet, all fats are not considered equal. For instance, **monounsaturated fat** is considered one of the healthier fats to eat. According to the American Heart Association, replacing unhealthy fats with foods containing monounsaturated fats can help reduce cholesterol levels. Incorporate monounsaturated fats in your diet by snacking on a handful of nuts or adding avocados to a salad.

Lose Weight

Being overweight raises total cholesterol levels according to the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute (NHLBI). Even losing a modest amount of weight, such as 10 pounds, can decrease levels of bad cholesterol. If you are overweight, speak with your doctor about developing a healthy eating plan and starting an exercise program.

Read Nutrition Labels

You may be surprised at some of the ingredients in your food. A quick check of **nutrition labels** can let you know how much fat and cholesterol the food contains, which allows you to make better choices. You want to limit foods high in saturated fats and trans fats. Also, limit total cholesterol to less than 300 milligrams each day.

Quit Smoking

Smoking affects both good and bad cholesterol. Smoking can decrease levels of good cholesterol in the body and increases bad cholesterol. In addition, smoking can damage the arteries, which may allow cholesterol to stick to the walls of the arteries easier, leading to blockages. **Smoking cessation programs** are usually available through hospitals, colleges and community centers.

Increase Fiber In Your Diet

Adding fiber to your diet has several benefits including reducing how much LDL cholesterol is absorbed by the bloodstream. According to the Mayo Clinic, adding 5 to 10 grams of soluble fiber to your diet each day can help lower LDL cholesterol. Soluble fiber rich foods include peas, carrots, citrus fruits and barley.

Add Foods Containing Phytosterols

There is some evidence that eating foods with **phytosterols** may block the absorption of cholesterol in the blood. Phytosterols are found in foods such as wheat germ, almonds and Brussels sprouts. In addition, phytosterols are also available in certain fortified foods and supplements.

Practice Stress Reduction Techniques

Although everyone feels stressed at least occasionally, chronic stress can affect your cholesterol level. Evidence suggests hormones produced when you're stressed cause

the liver to make more cholesterol. Techniques, such as imagery, meditation and biofeedback may help reduce stress levels. **Yoga**, tai chi and aerobic exercise are also good ways to manage stress.

Limit Saturated Fats And Trans Fats

Saturated fat and **trans fat** are considered the worst fats to eat because they raise LDL levels. The American Heart Association recommends limiting calories from fat to about 25 percent, but only 7 percent can be from saturated fat and 1 percent from trans-fat. Saturated fats are found in certain meats, dairy products, lard and fried foods. Healthier options include lean beef, poultry without the skin, and low-fat dairy products. Trans fats are found in chips, fried foods and vegetable shortening.

High cholesterol is one of the main risk factors for heart disease. The good news is cholesterol is also a controllable risk factor. Reducing cholesterol levels is essential to lower your risk of coronary artery disease, which can lead to heart attacks and strokes. Finding ways to lower cholesterol without medication is a great way to take control of your health.

What Food to Eat To Lower Cholesterol

People hear a lot about cholesterol, but many don't know exactly what cholesterol is. Cholesterol is a waxy substance naturally found in the body that actually has some useful properties. For example, it helps your body make necessary hormones and digest fatty foods. Unfortunately, cholesterol may build up inside of the arteries due to certain health conditions such as obesity, poor diet, lack of exercise, aging or a family history of high cholesterol. Over time, high cholesterol levels can lead to more serious health problems, such as heart disease or heart attack.

If you have high cholesterol, it's important to make sure that you get the proper foods in your diet to help lower those cholesterol levels. In this guide, we'll cover the foods you should eat and those you should avoid, as well as information about how to check your cholesterol levels.

10 Must-Have Foods for a High Fiber Diet Plan

Fiber is essential for maintaining a healthy weight and avoiding constipation. It can make you full faster and goes right through your system for smoother bowel movements. In general, high fiber foods generally share the same benefits like blood sugar regulation, weight-loss, cardiovascular health and cancer prevention. Many people are aware that eating an adequate amount of fiber is essential for living a healthy lifestyle. But what are the best foods you can add to a high fiber diet plan? Here are 10 you can start with:

Whole Grains

When it comes to a high fiber diet plan, eating more whole grains is a no-brainer. Whole grains are made up of unrefined grains that still contain their bran and germ, making them a better source of fiber than refined grains. They also contain essential nutrients like potassium and magnesium. You can purchase baked goods, like bread, made from whole grains for a healthy, high fiber diet.



Beans

Beans are an affordable way of getting a healthy boost in your daily



fiber intake. Not only are they filled with fiber, but they are also a good source of protein, can reduce the risk of certain cancers and help to lower cholesterol levels. The black bean variety, in particular, contains a sizeable amount of fiber. This legume is a great side dish to your regular meals.

Broccoli



Broccoli is just one of those super-foods that can be beneficial to your overall health in so many ways. Not only is it a great source of fiber, but it also contains special plant compounds known as phytonutrients that can help prevent heart disease, cancer and diabetes. Plus, it's a good source of antioxidants. One of the greatest things about broccoli is that you can add it to virtually any dish. Chop some broccoli into your fettuccini, mix it in with your chicken stir-fry or just serve it steamed as a side dish.

Raspberries

Speaking of antioxidants, raspberries is commonly known for being another great source for antioxidants that can help prevent Alzheimer's and cardiovascular disease, macular degeneration and certain forms of cancer. And, according to the Mayo Clinic, 1 cup of raspberries contains 8 grams of fiber, which is almost twice as much as a medium-sized apple.



Apples



While a medium-sized apple may not contain as much fiber as a cup of raspberries, it is still a nutrient-packed fruit that deserves a place on this high fiber foods list. Like broccoli, apples contain beneficial phytonutrients that can be beneficial for maintaining a person's blood sugar. Add in antioxidant and cardiovascular benefits, plus all the vitamins and nutrients found in apples, and you've got yourself one amazing piece of fruit.

Pears

Slightly ahead of apples in the fiber department (there are 5.5 grams of fiber in a medium-sized pear compared to the 4.4 grams in a medium-sized apple according to the Mayo Clinic), pears are another excellent fruit to add to your high fiber diet plan. While improving cardiovascular and colon health, they also help fight cancer-causing free radicals in the body. Plus, they are a sweet and juicy, and provide a softer alternative to a crunchy apple.



Brown Rice



Falling into the whole grain category, brown rice is a healthy, fiber-filled substitute for white rice. Aside from fiber, brown rice is also rich in manganese, selenium and magnesium. These factors combined make it a great defense from colon cancer, weight gain and high cholesterol.

Green Peas

Peas are a great source of fiber, but more importantly, they're chock full of vitamins and nutrients, which include:

- Vitamin K
- Vitamin C
- Vitamin A
- B vitamins
- Iron
- Copper
- Zinc
- Potassium
- Magnesium



Green peas are also known for their antioxidant and anti-inflammatory capabilities, and they can even help regulate blood sugar levels. If that's not enough reason to convince you to add them to your high fiber diet plan, keep in mind they are also very affordable.

Artichokes



Not only are artichokes a delicious way to add more variety to your high fiber meal plans, they also contain a myriad of nutrients that carry multiple health benefits. These nutrients include folic acid, vitamin C, manganese, iron and potassium. They also require very little preparation to enjoy, which is one of the main reasons why there were included in this list.

Bran

Another food that falls into the whole grain category, bran is actually the outer portion of the grain that is removed from refined grains. In other words, bran is the part of the grain that carries those important nutrients, along with germ. Bran muffins, cereals and flakes are foods you should include in your high fiber diet plan.



Herbal Program for High Blood Pressure (Hypertension) Taken from Footprints on the Path

Pressure exerted by the blood against the walls of the blood vessels, especially the

arteries. It varies with the strength of the heartbeat, the elasticity of the arterial walls, the volume and viscosity of the blood, and a person's health, age and physical condition.

Primary Formula

- Blood Pressurex – Maintain blood pressure already in normal range

Circulation

- GC-X – To stimulate blood circulation to reduce pressure
- Capsicum & Garlic w/Parsley, Capsicum or Garlic, HP
- Mega-Chel (Oral Chelation) – Often a permanent solution
- Cardio Assurance – To normalize blood flow
- Nattozimes Plus – To support the circulatory system
- CoQ10 – For circulation and to oxygenate the cells
- HS-II, Hawthorn Berries or Hawthorn Berries Extract
- Cordyceps – To lower pressure and reduce platelet aggregation

General

- Grape, High-Potency (Powerful Antioxidant)
- Potassium Combination – For correct potassium/sodium balance
- Olive Leaf Extract – To lower pressure and increase blood flow
- IGF-1 – To improve hypertension
- 7-Keto – For stress-induced high blood pressure
- Green Tea Extract – Has been known to lower blood pressure
- Sugar-Reg, Pro-Pancreas or Chromium GTF
- Super Algae – Has been known to lower blood pressure
- Skeletal Strength or Herbal CA
- Cornsilk, Hydrangea or Dandelion – As a diuretic
- Krill Oil or Super Omega-3 EPA

Essential Oils

- Ylang Ylang, Lavender, Lemon Bio, Clove Bud, Marjoram (avoid rosemary)
- Blend #1: Lavender + Ylang Ylang or Helichrysum
- Blend #2: Lavender + Lemon + Ylang Ylang
- Peppermint – For peripheral blood pressure
- Neroli – A general heart tonic

Diet

- Use Stevia Powder Extract instead of sugar to lower blood pressure.
- Eliminate coffee.
- Reduce salt by replacing opened capsules of capsicum & Garlic w/Parsley.
- Drink plenty of lemon water.

Other

Being overweight can be an important factor; a weight loss program should be considered. Consider the kidneys and liver. Reduce water retention (edema).

Nature's Sunshine Mega-Chel Oral Chelation Program

Caution

The following program is based on the Nature's Sunshine Mega-Chel product as well as other Nature's Sunshine products. If you wish to use these products for this program please contact JLS. If

you wish to follow a different oral chelation program, please follow the program that is advised for the product that you wish to use. Do not use this program with any products other than those Nature's Sunshine products listed below.

General Instructions

It is important to start slowly with this program and follow instructions. Otherwise, symptoms such as nausea, dizziness, headaches and skin eruptions may occur. It is also important to taper off as instructed, or fatigue and temporary nutritional deficiencies may result.

Working up to a Full Dose

For the first week, take the following with breakfast and dinner:

- 1 tablet of Mega-Chel
- ½ ounce of Colloidal Minerals OR 1 tablet of Mineral Maintenance.
- Every week increase the amount of Mega-Chel by one tablet. The second week, take two tablets of Mega-Chel and two tablets of Mineral Maintenance with breakfast and dinner. Continue this until you reach full program status (up to 12 tablets a day). If you are using Colloidal Minerals, gradually increase the amount of this supplement until you are taking 1 ounce in the morning and 1-ounce at night.

Full Program

A full dose of Mega-Chel is 4-6 tablets twice daily, depending on body weight. Large people should take 6 tablets twice a day. Small people should take 4 tablets twice a day. Individuals of average height and weight should find 5 tablets twice a day sufficient.

When you reach full dose, you will be taking the following with breakfast and dinner:

- 4-6 Mega-Chel tablets
- 1 ounce of Colloidal Minerals OR 4-6 Mineral Maintenance tablets.
- Stay on this full dose for a least one-month for each 10 years of your age. For example, if you are 40 you need to stay on the full dose for at least four months, six months if you are 60, etc.

Tapering Off

It is critical that you taper off slowly. On the full program you are taking large doses of certain vitamins and minerals, and your body will get lazy about extracting them from food. If you quit all at once, your body may experience a sudden drop in nutrient levels until it readjusts to absorbing these vitamins and minerals from food. Taper off by reducing the amount of tablets you take each week by two. After completing the program, some people use Mega-Chel as their daily vitamin and mineral supplement by taking two tablets per day.

Cleansing Reactions

As the body removes the plaque from the walls of the arteries, the blood cholesterol levels will temporarily rise. This is normal. The kidneys and liver will remove the calcium, cholesterol and impurities from the body. If there are indications that these organs are weak, it may be necessary to give them extra support. People with kidney weakness (history of symptoms like arthritis, chronic back pain, urinary infections, etc.) should take two KB-C with each meal. People with liver weakness (history of high cholesterol, skin problems, digestive upset, etc.) should take 1 teaspoon LOCLO in a large glass of water or juice upon arising and before retiring, plus two LIV-C with each meal.

You may also wish to add some of the following supplements for special problems. Work up to these amounts gradually if you wish. For heart problems, take two HSII or two Hawthorn Berries capsules with each meal. For mental support, take two Ginkgo & Hawthorn combination capsules with each meal. For varicose veins and high risk for stroke, take two Butcher's Broom capsules with each meal.

CERTIFIED MEN'S HEALTH COUNSELOR ONLINE COURSE - SESSION 11 QUESTION & ANSWERS

NAME:

ADDRESS: _____
CITY, STATE, ZIP, PC: _____
PHONE: _____
FAX: _____
E-MAIL: _____

Please be sure to fill out the information above, complete the test and e-mail or mail it back to us at iridology@netzero.net or P.O. Box 485, Weimar, CA, 95736-0485. We will grade your question & answer session and will let you know if we have any questions or concerns. **Please use a separate sheet to do this assignment.**

1. Doctors diagnose patients with hypertension when their blood pressure is repeatedly above:
2. Hypertension occurs as a result of a variety of factors including:
3. What are the hypertension types and their descriptions?
4. What is included in a low blood pressure diet?
5. What are the 10 best foods to lower blood pressure?
6. What are the 10 tips for lowering blood pressure naturally?
7. What are the 10 foods surprisingly high in sodium?
8. What are the 8 ways to reduce sodium in your daily diet?
9. What are the top foods to avoid with high blood pressure?
10. What are the top 5 myths about high blood pressure?
11. What is the DASH diet and why would you use it?
12. What are the 10 most common cholesterol myths?
13. What are the 10 natural ways to lower cholesterol?