



THE COACH APPROACH

HYPERTENSION - SELF HELP GUIDE

Hypertension is a very common condition which has the potential to cause some quite serious symptoms, but there are treatments available from your doctor to keep it under control.

This guide will take you through the potential symptoms of hypertension, the treatments and give you some practical steps that you can take to help yourself if you have hypertension and to look after yourself to try and prevent the condition.

What is hypertension and how can it affect you?

Hypertension is simply another way of saying 'high blood pressure', and your blood pressure is considered high if it is consistently above 140/90mmHg (millimeters of mercury).

High blood pressure puts strain on your heart, your blood vessels and your other organs, and may put you at risk of a number of serious health conditions, particularly if you have the condition over the long term.

With hypertension, you are more at risk of cardiovascular disease, strokes, kidney disease, poor circulation, damage to your heart muscle and tissue, aortic aneurysms and more, so it is definitely worth visiting your doctor for regular check-ups and doing all you can to live healthily and prevent high blood pressure.

What are the causes of high blood pressure?

It's not always obvious what has caused high blood pressure, and as many as 90% of people who have the condition have what is known as 'essential hypertension', where there is no clear medical cause.

There is a higher risk of hypertension if:

- You are overweight
- You have a relative with the condition
- You are over 65 years old
- You don't exercise consistently
- You overdo alcohol, coffee and any other caffeine drinks
- You smoke
- You suffer from insomnia
- You are of Caribbean or African descent
- You eat too much salt
- You don't eat plenty of fruit and vegetables

Treatment methods

Your doctor will do a blood pressure check and look at your weight and other factors. He or she may then recommend lifestyle changes to lower your blood pressure naturally, or may recommend medication.

There are several different types of medication for blood pressure, and you may take only one type, or you may need a combination of them.

Common blood pressure medications:

Angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors lower your blood pressure by relaxing your blood vessels.

Angiotensin-2 receptor blockers (ARBs) work similarly to ACE inhibitors and can be recommended if the side effects from the ACE inhibitors cause problems.

Calcium channel blockers work in a different way and reduce your blood pressure by widening, rather than relaxing, your blood vessels.

Diuretics (you might know them as water pills) flush excess water and salt from your body, and might be recommended if the side effects from calcium channel blockers cause you any problems.

Beta-blockers are another alternative which reduce your blood pressure by making your heart beat more slowly and less forcefully.

You could have to take the medication for the rest of your life, or your doctor may reduce, or even stop, the medicine if your blood pressure continues to be under control long term.

There are some known side effects with blood pressure medications, but most people aren't affected by them, and for those that are, often a change in medicines will usually help.

Your doctor may make a further recommendation to explore clinical hypnotherapy to help you live a healthier lifestyle and control your blood pressure.

Hypnotherapy is an excellent solution for many of the things that can lead to high blood pressure. It can help with weight loss, smoking cessation, and can even help you find and deal with any potential causes of your hypertension, such as anxiety and stress.

While there are many things you can do to improve your own health and reduce your blood pressure, you should seek a professional medical opinion first as the doctor may prefer to give you medication, depending on your lifestyle and symptoms.

Having said that, it is possible for lifestyle changes to actually prevent you from getting high pressure in the first place, so why not start now?

1. Exercise regularly

We all know we need to exercise consistently, and here's another good reason to do it. Regular exercise lowers your blood pressure and, of course, will help you lose weight, which will also lower your blood pressure.

Exercise doesn't have to be boring, though. If you can't bear to run another step or face the treadmill at the gym, why not try a boxercise class, Zumba, circuit training or even a burlesque class?

There's no rule that says you have to suffer through your exercise. Make it fun! If you enjoy it, that will reduce your stress and, you've guessed it, reduce your blood pressure.

To have enough of an effect, you need to do a minimum of 2 hours and 30 minutes of reasonable intensity aerobic exercise every week.

2. Eat a healthy diet

Salt is well known for raising your blood pressure, and the more you eat, the higher your blood pressure, so eat low or no-salt versions of everything you can. Substitute herbs and garlic for salt in cooking to keep the flavour. If you do need a little salt at the table, you can use a salt substitute which is potassium chloride, rather than sodium chloride.

Drink plenty of water to ensure you aren't dehydrated, and eat plenty of vegetables, salad and fruit.

A low fat diet with lots of wholegrain fibre, fresh fruit and vegetables will lower your blood pressure.

Again, you don't have to suffer and starve yourself, and nor do you have to totally deprive yourself. If you really want a piece of cake or a chocolate bar, then there's no reason you shouldn't have one, as long as you have them as an occasional treat.

Attempting to cut all treats out of your diet will only make you crave them, and then you won't stick to the healthy eating.

3. Limit alcohol and caffeine intake

Alcohol is fine, unless your doctor says otherwise; if you stick to the recommended limit of no more than 14 units a week, as regularly drinking over the weekly limit will eventually raise your blood pressure over time.

If you are going to drink the full 14 units, spread the drinks out over at least three days, rather than having them all at once.

Caffeine is another culprit of raised blood pressure, so if you drink more than four cups of coffee a day you would benefit from cutting down.

If you must have a cup of coffee or tea, try the decaffeinated alternatives, or why not explore fruit teas and green tea?

4. Stop smoking

While smoking in itself doesn't increase your blood pressure, it does increase your risk of stroke and heart attack as it causes your arteries to narrow, just like high blood pressure does.

If you do already have hypertension, smoking will cause your arteries to narrow much more quickly than they otherwise would, and that will increase your risk of heart or lung disease.

If you really can't quit, at least cut down, but it is better to stop completely.

5. Lose weight

If you are overweight, your heart has to work harder to pump blood around your body, and that can raise your blood pressure.

The good news is that even losing a few pounds can lower your blood pressure quite a bit.

6. Sleep well

If you constantly suffer from insomnia and don't get enough sleep, long term, it's possible that you'll have a rise in your blood pressure and an increased risk of hypertension.

Try to get a minimum of six hours sleep every night.

If you really are struggling to sleep, consult your doctor. They may be able to help.

Conclusion

All is not lost if you have high blood pressure. Your doctor can help, and there are practical steps you can take to reduce your blood pressure which may even prevent hypertension altogether.

If you'd like to consider clinical hypnotherapy sessions to help you destress and improve your lifestyle, then please get in to.

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