TIPS FOR HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE

In this document you will find some very common foods and supplements. We know you’ll be as surprised as we were to learn which of these can be helpful in reducing high blood pressure, which can be harmful, and which could be somewhere in between.

You’ll see that we haven’t included the things that we believe are obvious. Avoid salt; don’t smoke; don’t eat foods that are high in fat; participate in mild aerobic exercise at least 4-times a week.

You can make a big impact on your high blood pressure if you follow a plan that includes diet, lifestyle and some supplementation. Plans are different from person to person based upon personal health history, family health history and personal habits. But there are common things to do right now.

Read through this list of common foods and supplements. Avoid those that are harmful and embrace those that are helpful.

**Acetaminophen:** People who take acetaminophen (Tylenol, others) daily are more likely to develop high blood pressure than are those who don’t take acetaminophen. There’s no evidence that occasional use of acetaminophen causes any long-term increase in blood pressure.

**Arginine:** Arginine is found in foods including nuts & legumes. Studies on both dietary Arginine and use of Arginine supplementation have shown lowered blood pressure. Arginine produces Nitric oxide which regulates the tone of the endothelium of the blood vessels: good endothelial tone = lower blood pressure.

**Avocado:** Avocados are rich in Vitamin B6, pantothenic acid, folic acid and Vitamin E. Plus they are a great source of magnesium and potassium. All of these are individually effective in their contribution toward lowering blood pressure. [Avocado: Image courtesy of Pixabay](https://pixabay.com)

**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.

**Bitter orange (Citrus aurantium):** This supplement fills the niche vacated by ephedra in some weight-loss products. But that doesn’t necessarily mean it’s safer. Bitter orange can increase heart rate and blood pressure and has been linked to strokes and heart attacks.
**Black Cohosh**: The mechanism by which black cohosh acts is not clear, but research has suggested that in women who had estrogen replacement therapy, there was an increased risk of blood clots and other cardiovascular events.  

**Calcium**: Foods rich in calcium include low fat milk, cheese, dairy, yogurt, leafy greens, broccoli, sardines, and salmon. Studies have shown that diets low in calcium can contribute to a risk for high blood pressure. Further, studies found that individuals with high blood pressure taking calcium supplements were able to lower their blood pressure.

**Canned or bottled tomato products**: As a rule, tomato products are problematic for people with hypertension. Canned tomato sauces, pasta sauces, and tomato juices are all high-sodium culprits. A half-cup serving of classic marinara sauce can have more than 450 milligrams. A cup of tomato juice comes in at 650 milligrams. You can often find low-sodium or reduced-sodium versions of all of these. For people looking to keep their blood pressure down, these alternative options are a smart choice.

**Cinnamon**: A meta-analysis of a handful of clinical trials using cinnamon in relationship to lowering blood pressure has shown that cinnamon measurably lowered both systolic and diastolic blood pressure in adults with pre-diabetes and Type 2 diabetes. Though the reason for these results is not clear, it does seem that cinnamon reduces the amount of circulating insulin, which may explain why it's effective for those with diabetes. It was found that a half a teaspoon a day is enough to reduce your blood pressure levels. However, the authors of this analysis suggest that it is best using the stick form of cinnamon rather than the cinnamon found in spice bottles in the grocery.

**Coffee**: If you have hypertension or pre-hypertension now may be the time to kick your coffee habit. Your morning cup (or cups) of Joe can actually cause a temporary spike in blood pressure. If you’re a regular coffee drinker, this may be contributing to your hypertension. In fact, any caffeinated drinks may cause an increase in your blood pressure—this includes soda or caffeinated tea.

**CoQ10**: Studies on CoQ10 have demonstrated that supplementation reduced high blood pressure. Our bodies have a decreasing ability to generate CoQ10 as we age. CoQ10 is an enzyme found in the mitochondria of cells in our bodies. Our hearts have an exceedingly high demand metabolically, and tend to deplete CoQ10. Supplementation can help to continue the production of nutrients required for the biochemical activity of a healthy heart. In addition, CoQ10 has been shown to improve membrane fluidity, decreasing blood viscosity which aids in the reduction of high blood pressure.
**Echinacea:** May lengthen the time of the electrical cycle that is critical to heart rate, putting a person at risk of certain types of arrhythmias; increases the risk of liver toxicity and damage.

**Ephedra (Ma-Huang):** This supplement, used in weight-loss products, is banned in the United States because of safety concerns. Ephedra is linked to high blood pressure, heart attack, stroke and other serious health problems.

**Folic acid:** Found in green leafy vegetables, beans, and citrus fruits. In the US, beginning in 1998, folate was required to be added to grain products, including wheat flour, cornmeal, pasta, and rice. Clinical studies found that either diets rich in folic acid, or supplementation with folic acid resulted in lowering of blood pressure.

**Frozen pot pie:** 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. *Pot pie: Image courtesy of Wikipedia*

**Garlic:** Garlic is both helpful and potentially harmful for high blood pressure sufferers. Consumption of garlic, either whole garlic cloves or supplements, has been found to reduce blood pressure. The reduction of blood pressure is the result of garlic’s blood thinning properties. However, this is where garlic can be harmful. Because it is such an effective blood thinner, use of garlic can increase bleeding risk with warfarin, aspirin, Plavix, or drugs like heparin, a blood thinner used in pharmacological applications.

**Ginkgo:** Gingko is similar to garlic. While it has some potential blood pressure lowering factors, it also has risks. Gingko contains terpenoids which dilate blood vessels and reduce the ability of platelets to stick together. These properties can increase blood flow through blood vessels, reducing the risk of heart disease and potentially also lowering blood pressure. However, the risk lies with people who may be taking warfarin, aspirin, or other blood thinning agents. Those, combined with gingko could result in enhanced bleeding risk. *Gingko leaves: Image courtesy of Flickr*

**Ginseng:** Ginseng can increase blood pressure and may lessen a person’s response to certain diuretic medications, which are used to treat hypertension that results from heart failure or kidney problems. Ginseng has been shown to make blood clot more quickly in people taking warfarin, potentially lessening the blood-thinning effects of the drug and raising the odds of a life-threatening clot.
**Grapefruit:** The fruit can have the effect of boosting the level of prescription drugs in the bloodstream, increasing their effect. This includes calcium-channel blockers to lower blood pressure, statins to lower cholesterol, and immunosuppressants that prevent the body from rejecting a transplanted organ. With the boosting of calcium-channel blockers by grapefruit there is risk of blood pressure being lowered too much. [Grapefruit: Image courtesy of Flickr](https://www.flickr.com/photos/)

**Guarana:** Guarana is a legal, powerful stimulant that you should avoid if you have high blood pressure. Guarana is often the primary stimulant in most energy drinks. Guarana is a South American plant that contains two times the caffeine found in coffee beans. Guarana contains alkaloids similar to caffeine, so you can expect similar side effects, such as increased heart rate and heart arrythmias. According to the University of California at Davis, 1 mg of guarana is equal to 40 mg of caffeine. The University of Maryland Medical Center, suggests green tea as a healthy alternative to caffeine-like supplements such as guarana.

**Kale:** Kale is high in fiber, lipoic acid and in folic acid, along with potassium, Vitamin C and Vitamin B6. All in all, just in this short list of nutrients found in Kale, it is no wonder that Kale is called a “Superfood”. [Kale: Image courtesy of Flickr](https://www.flickr.com/photos/)

**Kiwi:** Adding Kiwi to your diet could be a great addition for helping to lower blood pressure. A recent study showed that with 3 kiwi fruits a day, the test group was successful in lowering their blood pressure. This is thought to be due to the antioxidants found in kiwis. More studies are underway. [Kiwi: Image courtesy of Flickr](https://www.flickr.com/photos/)

**Lavender:** Using lavender as an essential oil has been thought to be effective in lowering blood pressure. Essential oils lower blood pressure by dilating arteries, acting as antioxidants to reduce oxidative stress and by decreasing emotional stress.
**Licorice:** May raise blood pressure, may increase the likelihood of toxic levels of digoxin (also known as digitalis), which is used to treat atrial fibrillation and sometimes heart failure. Image courtesy of [Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Licorice)

**Lipoic Acid:** Yeast, liver, kidney, spinach, broccoli, and potatoes are good sources of alpha-lipoic acid. Lipoic acid supplements appear to increase the arterial wall diameter in its action as an anti-oxidant, and likely contributing to lower blood pressure.

**Lycopene:** Lycopene is an antioxidant that is found in tomatoes. Studies are mixed on the efficacy for consumption of tomatoes or Lycopene supplements in the reduction of high blood pressure. Lycopene found in whole tomatoes is a healthy component of the tomato, but the fiber found in tomatoes interferes with Lycopene absorption. Additionally the clinical studies of Lycopene supplementation have not been consistent.

**Magnesium:** Good dietary magnesium sources include nuts and seeds as well as leafy green vegetables. Diets low in magnesium can contribute to HBP. 80% of Americans do not get enough Mg. Studies showed that Mg supplements lowered HBP.

**Margarine:** Margarine is not necessarily bad; you just have to make sure to pick the kind with no transfats. Read the label closely. It is important for your health to avoid transfats all together. Margarine: Image courtesy of [Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Margarine)

**N-acetylcysteine:** This well known antioxidant has a mixed history for use in reducing high blood pressure. It works to replenish intracellular levels of glutathione which are diminished as we age. Glutathione supplements have not proved as effective as glutathione-related agents. So, early studies indicated it was an effective blood pressure reduction agent. However, recent studies indicate that use of N-acetylcysteine actually can result in an increase in pulmonary hypertension. Be careful using this in your supplement regimen.

**Oats:** Oats are always thought to be a very versatile food. They are high in fiber and have been shown in clinical trials to reduce blood pressure, and also reducing LDL cholesterol (the “bad” form) as well as blood glucose levels. One of these studies actually did a head-on test of oat cereal against wheat cereal, and the oat cereal was the significant winner in blood pressure reduction. Oats: Image courtesy of [Pixabay](https://pixabay.com/en/oats-grain-flakes-wheat-cereal-1075087/).
**Omega-3 Acids:** Omega-3 fatty acids are found in fish, such as salmon, tuna, and halibut, other seafoods including algae and krill, some plants, and nut oils. (Our body does not produce omega-3). Dozens of studies have shown that supplementation with omega-3 reduces high blood pressure.

**Peaches:** Peaches are a great source of potassium, even better than bananas. And dried peaches or apricots are that much more valuable. Potassium is known to be essential in a diet focusing on lowering blood pressure.

**Pickles:** Preserving any food requires salt. The salt stops the decay of the food and keeps it edible longer. However, salt can take even the most innocent cucumber and make it a sodium sponge. The longer vegetables sit in canning and preserving liquids, the more sodium they can pick up. A whole dill pickle spear can contain as much as 300 milligrams of sodium. Reduced sodium options are available, containing about 100 milligrams of sodium each.

**Pork tenderloin:** Purdue University researchers found that when adults ate lean pork, instead of chicken and fish as their main protein source, they had the same healthy blood pressure benefits. Plus, pork also contains thiamin, phosphorus, zinc, selenium, niacin, vitamin B6, and vitamin B12.

**Potassium:** Foods rich in potassium include potatoes, lima beans, bananas, tomato sauce, beet greens, fat-free yogurt or milk, halibut, tuna, and orange juice. Diets low in potassium have been shown to contribute to high blood pressure. Our bodies require a balance of potassium and sodium for management of blood pressure. It is important to shoot for a 2:1 ratio of potassium to sodium; just reducing sodium alone isn’t enough if you want to manage high blood pressure.

**Prunes:** Like many other dried fruits, prunes are an excellent source of both fiber and potassium – two substances that are well-known in their ability to manage high blood pressure. While there have not been a huge number of clinical studies on prunes (or prune juice) one study showed consuming prunes/prune juice reduced blood pressure and LDL cholesterol levels, when compared to a control group, while also having a higher HDL level. **Prunes:** Image courtesy of Flickr

**Psyllium:** Psyllium is a food substance of high fiber density that has been shown to lower blood pressure as well as lower blood glucose levels and levels of LDL cholesterol. A recent study tested Psyllium against another form of soluble fiber, and found that while both halves of the
test showed reduced body weight, fasting blood sugar and insulin levels, Psyllium use alone had also reduced the subjects' blood pressure.

**Raisins:** Raisins contain blood-pressure-friendly potassium, as well as fiber and beneficial compounds called polyphenols that keep artery walls flexible. That's good because stiff blood vessel walls raise blood pressure. They are a great snack food that can be a very useful tool in reducing blood pressure.  

**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.

**Red Clover:** Red clover contains isoflavones which act to dilate the blood vessels. Red clover has been shown to improve the flow of blood through arteries and veins. Isoflavone treatment may also lower blood pressure, because of their blood thinning effect. But, this also puts red clover in the same category as garlic and gingko, where there can be a risk for people who may be taking warfarin, aspirin, or other blood thinning agents. Those, combined with red clover could result in enhanced bleeding risk.

**Sauerkraut:** It is 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.

**Saw Palmetto:** Saw palmetto is used by more than 2 million men for BPH, according to a 2002 review of the use of complementary and alternative medicine. The mechanism by which saw palmetto works is not entirely clear, but it appears to increase the risk of bleeding in people taking anticoagulant drugs or anti-platelet drugs, both of which are intended to prevent blood clots.

**St. John's wort:** One of the top-10-selling herbs in the United States, St.-John’s-wort can cause adverse reactions by affecting an enzyme involved in metabolizing more than half of all prescription medications, according to the February review in the Journal of the American College of Cardiology. The result for cardiovascular patients: Medications can become less effective, resulting in the return of a person’s arrhythmia, high blood pressure, propensity for blood clots (particularly if taking warfarin, a blood-thinning medication), or high levels of cholesterol (as concentrations of statins are reduced). And in patients who have had organ
transplants and take immunosuppressants so the body does not reject the organ, St.-John’s-wort can dampen their effect as well. St. John’s wort: Image courtesy of Wikimedia

**Vitamin B1:** Also known as Thiamine. Found in cereal grains, oatmeal, sunflower seeds, brown rice, asparagus, kale, cauliflower, potatoes and eggs – effective for lowering blood pressure in managing the flow of electrolytes in both nerve and muscle cells.

**Vitamin B2:** Also known as Riboflavin. Found in dairy products, milk, cheese, etc. There is roughly 10% of the population that has a genetic predisposition toward high blood pressure. Several studies on this population found that supplementation with Vitamin B2 can lower blood pressure in these individuals.

**Vitamin B6:** Also known as Pyridoxine. Found in cereal grains, legumes, vegetables (carrots, spinach, peas, and potatoes), milk, cheese, eggs, fish, liver, meat, and flour. Pyridoxine is required for the synthesis of the neurotransmitters serotonin and norepinephrine and for myelin formation, and is essential for managing blood pressure.

High homocysteine levels have been shown to result in high blood pressure. Vitamin B-6 and vitamin B-12 deficiencies are the leading cause of high homocysteine levels and replenishing these vitamins can lower homocysteine levels. While you may not be able to reverse the damage already done to your blood vessels, lowering your homocysteine level may prevent any further damage which may help to keep your blood pressure from going any higher.

**Vitamin D:** The data presented from more than 35 studies and 155,000 people, revealed that high concentrations of Vitamin D resulted in lower blood pressure levels and a reduced risk of hypertension. As we spend more time indoors, away from the sunlight we are exposed less and less to adequate doses of Vitamin D. Studies were also focusing on African Americans who tend to stay indoors. However, there are concerns with supplementation of Vitamin D for lowering blood pressure, since there is a relationship between Vitamin D and calcium uptake. Too much Vitamin D can result in hypercalcemia, causing calcium deposits in the circulatory system that could be dangerous.

Consider your routine exposure to the sun to help you to determine if supplementation is appropriate for you.

**White beans:** White beans are another versatile source of potassium and fiber, the one-two combination that has been shown to be effective in blood pressure management. White beans: Image courtesy of Flickr

**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.

**Yohimbe:** May increase heart rate and likelihood of high blood pressure in people who take ACE inhibitors (often used to treat hypertension or congestive heart failure) or beta blockers (used to treat arrhythmias and hypertension and to protect the heart after a heart attack).