

## How to Prevent or Decrease Hypertension

Every cell in the body requires an ongoing supply of blood to deliver oxygen and nutrients and to remove waste products. This flow of blood causes a certain amount of pressure to be exerted on the wall of a person's arteries. An individual suffers from Hypertension when blood pressure is determined to be or exceeding 140 mm Hg (millimetres of mercury) systolic (as the heart contracts and pushes blood through the arteries) or 90 mm Hg diastolic (as the heart relaxes and fills with blood) on two or more separate occasions.



The primary factor of high blood pressure is that it makes the heart work harder and puts greater pressure on the arteries than is necessary. As a result the heart may become enlarged and less efficient, and the arterial walls may be damaged. Such damage can reduce the flow of blood and oxygen to the kidneys, heart, brain, and eyes, and can lead to blood clots in the narrowing arteries.

Hypertension ranks as the most common risk factor for disease of the heart, blood vessels and kidneys, including heart failure, stroke, kidney failure, and atherosclerosis. High blood pressure has been found to contribute to millions of deaths per year worldwide. This is of particular concern considering that hypertension can be controlled and even prevented. Factors that can help prevent hypertension, or at least reduce its severity or postpone it include some very basic dietary and lifestyle steps:

1. Consume less salt. Eat a low-fat, high-fiber diet that is rich in fruits and vegetables. Moderate the consumption of alcohol and caffeine and increase calcium intake.



2. Drug therapy is considered to be the most effective form of treating high blood pressure however, regular exercise has proven to have a lowering effect on systolic and diastolic blood pressure. It is a very safe and valuable therapy for many hypertensive individuals and has many additional applications to a healthy and active life. A correctly designed exercise program may be as effective as any drug therapy for some people. Research shows that low to moderate intensity (60-80% of MHR) aerobic exercise can lower systolic blood pressure by 5-25 mm Hg and diastolic blood pressure by 3-15 mm Hg in mild to moderate hypertensive individuals.

3. Check your blood pressure and pulse regularly. See your doctor if they're high. The top blood pressure number should be less than 140. The bottom number should be less than 90. A normal resting heart rate (pulse) is between 66 and 82.

4. Lose weight if you are overweight. Many doctors think weight loss is the single most important nondrug treatment for prevention of hypertension.

5. Quit Smoking. Hypertension and smoking significantly increase your risk of stroke.



6. Reduce your stress. When you feel stressed, your arteries and veins constrict, which is detrimental to your health.

7. Know your family's health history. If you have close relatives with hypertension, you are more likely to suffer from this disease. You will need to be even more diligent in checking your blood pressure.

8: Check your cholesterol once a year. High blood cholesterol can narrow arteries and make you more prone to hypertension.

9: Keep a journal of your cholesterol, blood pressure and pulse.

Lowering systolic blood pressure by a mere 2 mm Hg has shown to reduce deaths from stroke by 6%, heart disease by 4% and all causes by 3%. Furthermore, a drop in diastolic blood pressure of as little as 1-3 mm Hg can lower the overall incidence of hypertension in the general public by more than 20-50%.

Performance Physical Therapy now offers a "lets Get Physical" program – specifically designed for those patients with or at risk of hypertension.

The information on this page is provided to you from Performance Physical Therapy. It is not intended to replace any information/treatment provided to you by your health care provider. If you experience any pain while participating in this exercise, please contact your health care provider. Please feel free to check with your Physical Therapist if you have any questions about the information provided on this page.

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