

## Natural ways to lower blood pressure

*Understanding the risks and knowing what to eat — and not eat — is key to fighting high blood pressure without medication.*

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Cutting down on your sodium intake and stepping up your exercise routine can lower blood pressure. (Photo: kurhan/Shutterstock)

High blood pressure, which affected more than 1 billion people worldwide in 2015, is known as the silent killer — many people don't realize they have it until it's too late. A heart attack brought on by high blood pressure can occur without any warning signs or symptoms. That's why it's important to learn about natural ways to lower blood pressure.

In a healthy person, blood pressure can rise and fall throughout the day. When blood pressure stays high for a long period of time, this leads to an increased risk of heart disease, stroke and heart attacks. Heart disease and stroke are the number one and number three leading causes of death in the U.S., though the United States actually has the lowest rates of blood pressure in the world, according to a [new study](#) published in *The Lancet*.

That study also showed that people living in low- and middle-income countries (especially in South Asia and Africa) are more likely to have high blood pressure, whereas high-income countries have seen a sharp decline in blood pressure rates in recent years. In addition, men are more likely to have high blood pressure than women.

"When you look at this globally, blood pressure is a condition of poverty, not affluence," Majit Ezzati, a professor of global environmental health at Imperial College London who led the analysis, [told CNN](#). "In the high-income world ... [rates] are coming down despite the aging and increasing population. But in the population [in Asia], as the age goes up, the blood pressure tends to be higher."

All this goes to show that keeping blood pressure under control is critical. Here are three ways to do that without the help of medication.

### Get moving



A few months of consistent exercise (walks through the park count!) should bring your blood pressure down to healthy levels. (Photo: Monkey Business Images/Shutterstock)

Many of those who suffer from high blood pressure turn to medication, but this is simply a band-aid approach that doesn't address the root of the problem. A much healthier alternative is to use diet and exercise to maintain normal blood pressure levels.

Consistent exercise strengthens the heart and enables it to pump more blood with less effort. When the heart works less, the pressure on the arteries decreases and blood pressure is lowered. It could take up to a few months of consistent exercise to bring blood pressure down to healthy levels. The only catch is that you've got to keep exercising several days a week or blood pressure levels can shoot right back up.

Exercise brings with it another perk that helps maintain a healthy heart and lower blood pressure — getting rid of excess weight. But just because you're exercising doesn't mean you can eat anything you want and not suffer the consequences. A heart-healthy diet is just as important as exercise to avoid the dangers of high blood pressure.

### Sack the salt



There's a sweet spot of sodium in our diet, and too much or too little can lead to health problems. (Photo: Nenov Brothers Images/Shutterstock)

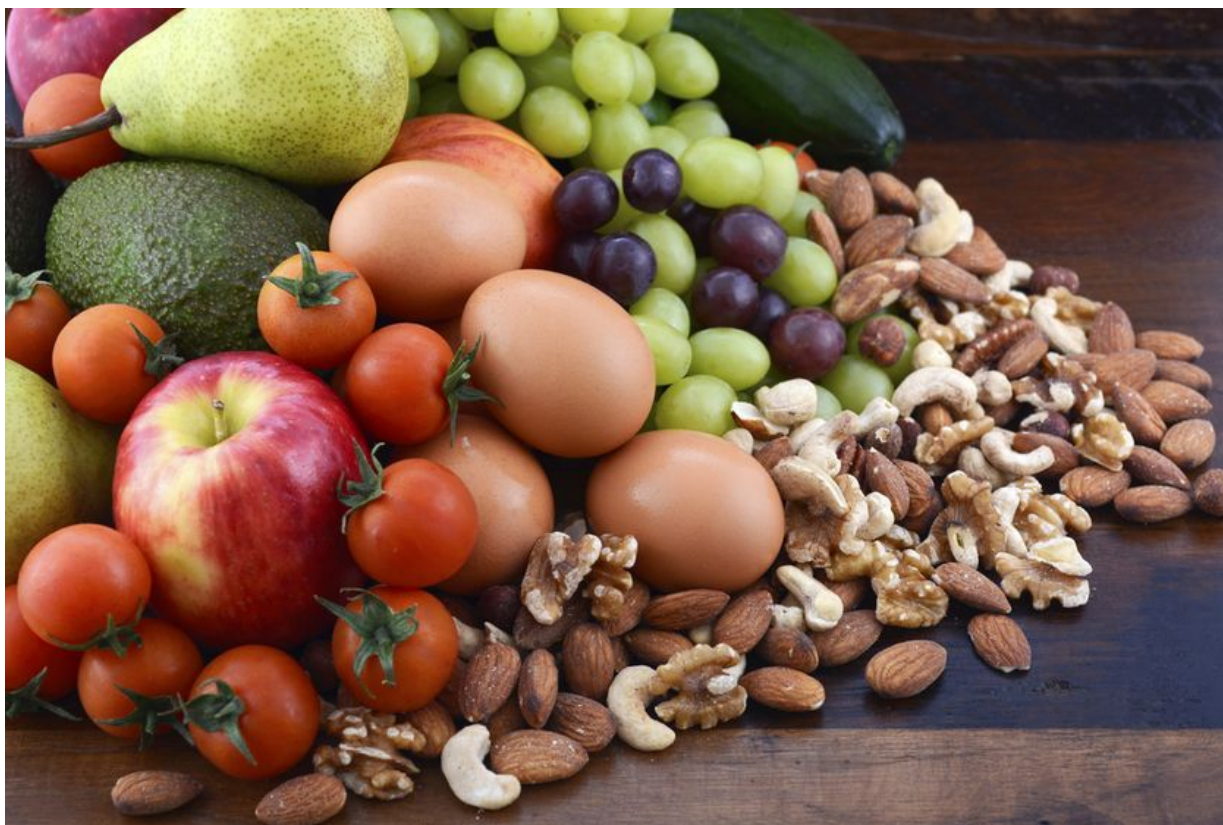
Another key step to lowering blood pressure, also known as hypertension, is to reduce sodium intake. According to the [Mayo Clinic](#), the average American consumes about 3,400 mg of sodium daily. But according to the [Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#), we should be limiting sodium intake to less than 2,300 mg a day, or 1,500 for those 51 or older or with high blood pressure, diabetes or chronic disease.

Many processed foods and condiments contain high amounts of sodium. Start checking the labels and opt for foods that are low sodium or completely salt-free and then use herbs and spices to jazz up the flavor factor.

Keeping a variety of spices in your cabinet makes it easier to stay away from salt. Onion powder, garlic powder, curry, chili powder and pepper are some of the more common spices you can use to kick up the taste without making your blood pressure soar.

Eliminating table salt can go a long way toward lowering your sodium intake. If you're in the habit of using the salt shaker liberally when you eat, try filling a few salt shakers with your favorite spices. You can even mix up a few in a small ziploc bag and take it on the go for when you eat out. (When the hostess or waitress looks at you funny, tell them it's your blood pressure medication — you like it ground up and added to your food. Or you can tell the truth.)

#### **Find a diet that works**



The DASH diet is high in clean, healthy foods and low in sugar and fats. It has been named the best overall diet repeatedly. (Photo: Milleflore Images/Shutterstock)

A diet that includes fresh fruits and vegetables, plenty of whole grains and low-fat dairy products can also help lower high blood pressure. The [DASH](#) diet follows these guidelines, and is recommended by physicians for those struggling with hypertension. Created by Dr. Tom Moore and his research team at Harvard Medical School, this [healthy eating plan](#) lowers blood pressure and helps keep the body healthy overall.

DASH was recently chosen as the [number one diet](#) on U.S. News and World Report's [Top-Rated Diets](#). It ranked higher than Jenny Craig, Weight Watchers, the Mediterranean Diet and many other popular eating plans.

The Pritikin Program is another eating plan that is reported to prevent and control hypertension, improve almost all of the modifiable factors for heart disease and promote long-term weight loss. This diet's focus is on vegetables, fruit, whole grains, beans and peas, starchy vegetables and small amounts of nonfat dairy, soy and fish.

**Editor's note:** *This story has been updated since it was originally published in October 2011.*

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Viv Wright • 12 hours ago

Despite this there will still be some who have genetic factors that will play against them, I am one such individual.

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emwcee • a year ago

Slow breathing/meditation is amazing. I use an app called "Breath Pacer" which uses tones to pace your breathing so it is 6 breaths per minute. I can lower my blood pressure by 20 points or more in the short-term, and consistent meditation can lower it in the long-term. But you have to keep it up.

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djpr8 • a day ago

Olive Leaf is the best at reducing blood pressure!

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Supermoon791 • 5 hours ago

This is not new news. And hormonal imbalance can cause high blood pressure too. This was not discussed in this article. It is easy to see why poverty can cause high blood pressure; not having enough money is a big stressor. As for salt, it is hard to avoid altogether and having too little sodium can be harmful as well. I do agree finding the root cause is the best answer. I think the cause of what is causing the blood pressure is what needs to be treated and the blood pressure will go down. Blood pressure is more of a symptom than a disease all by itself. And as someone stated it can be genetic as well. I do think also going to the doctor's office can cause anxiety to shoot up significantly for some people, so that when the blood pressure is taken it is unnaturally high for the simple fact that the person is nervous.

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