

# The Wellness Express

Jump on the train to good health

Issue 2, May 2010

## What's Your Risk for High Blood Pressure?

### Presented by:

High blood pressure, also known as hypertension, affects a staggering amount of people: 80 million in North America alone.<sup>1,2</sup> Even though it's the most common cardiovascular disease, hypertension is called the *Silent Killer*. Many people are completely unaware they have hypertension, and it can cause significant damage to the body without producing symptoms. It's linked to a higher risk of heart attack, kidney damage and stroke. In fact, 70% of strokes are directly connected to hypertension.<sup>1</sup>

### Watch for These Risks

If you ...

- Smoke
- Drink alcohol
- Don't exercise
- Are overweight
- Eat foods high in sodium & saturated fat

... you're at greater risk of developing hypertension. Age and race also play a big role. Black people and people 55+ years of age are more prone to get hypertension. If your family has a history of heart disease, diabetes or high blood pressure, these factors also increase your vulnerability to developing this condition.

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### Blood Pressure Basics

It's normal for your blood pressure to fluctuate throughout the day, as several things can impact it, such as food, exercise and stress. But consistently high blood pressure levels need to be taken seriously.

When your blood pressure is measured, you'll be told two numbers. The top number is the systolic - this shows the blood pressure as your heart beats and fills your arteries with blood. The bottom number is the diastolic - this reveals pressure in your arteries as your heart rests between beats. Normal blood pressure is considered below 120/80. (Diabetics and kidney disease patients should be below 130/80). If on two separate occasions your blood pressure measures 140/90 or above, you're classified as having hypertension. If your levels are in the range of 120-139/80-89, you're categorized as prehypertension - a state that increases the likelihood of developing hypertension at some point in your life. For many people, it may be necessary to take daily medication to control blood pressure. However, hypertension sufferers can often reduce - or even eliminate - the need for medication by making lifestyle changes.

### Exercise of the Week

Pelvic Rotations – Knees Together

Difficulty: Easy

(Consult your chiropractor before starting this or any other exercise.)

**Start:** Lie down on back with legs bent to 90 degrees and feet on floor. Place arms out to side, palms up.

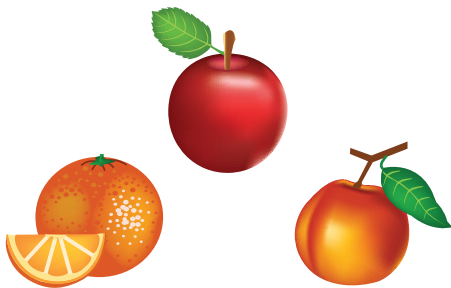
**Exercise:** Bring knees together. Then, let legs roll all the way to side so that knee rests on floor. Hold for 30-60 seconds, and then return to starting position. Switch sides, and repeat 2X per side.



## Lifestyle Factors: You Can Take Control

Most of your daily sodium intake comes from processed food, not a salt shaker. One way to consume less sodium is to adopt DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension). On this diet plan, your aim is a daily sodium intake of 1,500 milligrams or less. You can achieve this by switching from packaged foods to whole foods, with a heavy emphasis on unrefined grains, fruits, vegetables, legumes and nuts. Get 4 to 5 servings of fruits and an equal amount of vegetables each day. Potassium helps regulate blood pressure, so the DASH diet also recommends you eat potassium-rich foods like bananas and tofu. You should choose low-fat dairy products and limit your meat intake to two servings a day.

Get active! Regular cardiovascular exercise of 30 minutes, three to four times a week, can slash blood pressure.



## Natural Choices for Calming Hypertension

Can high blood pressure be lowered with natural substances? There's evidence that coenzyme Q10 (CoQ10) may help lower blood pressure.

In a University of Texas study of hypertension and coenzyme Q10, researchers discovered that 51% of patients came completely off of between one and three antihypertensive drugs at an average of 4.4 months after starting CoQ10. The study subjects suffered no side effects or negative drug interactions.<sup>3</sup>

Omega 3 fatty acids may also be beneficial for keeping blood pressure under control. But larger studies need to be conducted to confirm these preliminary findings.

## Chiropractic and Hypertension

Can chiropractic techniques reduce blood pressure? An interesting study appeared in the *Journal of Hypertension*. In this pilot study, the patients had both hypertension and postural problems. Over the course of eight weeks, the patients received specialized chiropractic adjustments to the head and neck areas. The patients encountered a significant reduction in blood pressure. While more research needs to be done, the study authors believe the adjustments positively impacted the function of the neck's atlas vertebra, which plays a role in regulating blood pressure<sup>4</sup>

While you may not be able to control all the risk factors of hypertension, such as family history or race, you still have a lot of control over your lifestyle. By being proactive in this area, you may be able to dramatically reduce hypertension's damaging effects. Act now and get your blood pressure checked.

## Quote of the Week

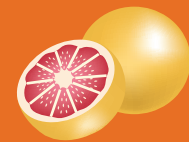
"It is remarkable how ones wits are sharpened by physical exercise."

- Pliny the Younger

## References and Sources:

1. *Blood Pressure Canada website*
2. *American Heart Association website*
3. Atlas vertebra realignment and achievement of arterial pressure goal in hypertensive patients: a pilot study -*Journal of Human Hypertension advance online publication, 2 March 2007;*

What is High Blood Pressure? - *National Institutes of Health website*



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