

What is Hypertension and what can I do?

Hypertension- is when the pressure of your blood is putting a lot of force on the walls of the arteries; hence it is also referred to as high blood pressure. When you go to the doctor and your blood pressure is measured they will provide you with two numbers. One is the systolic blood pressure which is caused by the pressure your heart pushes out blood. The other number is the diastolic pressure and that's when your heart relaxes and fills again with blood. These numbers can then be followed by a range such as normal, elevated blood pressure (pre-high blood pressure) or high blood pressure. Hypertension is diagnosed after your blood pressure has been taken several times and has remained high. Hypertension is also referred to as the "silent killer" because usually there are no symptoms. Hypertension could also lead to many cardiovascular disorders and kidney diseases.

However, there are lifestyle interventions that can help reduce high blood pressure. The following recommendations are; Don't smoke, exercise everyday, sleep at least 8 hours, manage stress and eat a healthy diet low in sodium.

Nutritional Recommendations: There are two diets that have proven to help with reducing high blood pressure. the DASH diet which focuses on whole grains, fruits and vegetables, beans and legumes, limited sweets and less than 1500 mg of sodium. The Mediterranean diet consist majority of legumes, whole grains, olive oil, nuts, fish and limited on red meats, and sweets.

| BP Category | Systolic Blood Pressure (SBP) | | Diastolic Blood Pressure (DBP) |
|---------------------|-------------------------------|-----|--------------------------------|
| Normal | <120 mm Hg | and | <80 mm Hg |
| Elevated | 120-129 mm Hg | and | <80 mm Hg |
| Hypertension | | | |
| Stage 1 | 130-139 mm Hg | or | 80-89 mm Hg |
| Stage 2 | ≥140 mm Hg | or | ≥90 mm Hg |

Foods to eat:

- Omega-3: salmon, sardines, walnuts, and flaxseeds
- Nuts: pistachios, walnuts, and pecans
- Calcium: chard, spinach, tofu, collard greens, mustard greens, bok choy, and kale
- Magnesium: chard, spinach, pumpkin seeds, summer squash, sesame seeds and beans
- Potassium: chard, spinach, bok choy, beets, brussel sprouts, broccoli, and avocados
- Riboflavin (vitamin B2): spinach, crimini mushrooms, asparagus, sea vegetables, and eggs
- Vitamin C: papaya, bell peppers, broccoli, brussels sprouts, strawberries, and pineapple
- Vitamin D: shitake and crimini mushrooms, eggs and sunshine
- Other recommendations: dark chocolate, celery seeds, garlic and fish oil

Foods to avoid:

- Processed meats are high in sodium: bacon, ham, pepperoni, spam, and sausage
- Ready to eat cereal high in sugar and refined carbohydrates
- Processed cheese
- Canned and boxed foods