

## High Blood Pressure - Hypertension

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### Overview

For something so common, it is remarkable how frequently it goes undiagnosed. When it is left untreated, high blood pressure can lead to some very serious, life-threatening conditions. Like so many of the so-called lifestyle disease, high blood pressure can often be controlled by making some simple changes in the way you live.

### Causes and Treatments for High Blood Pressure

Most people who have undiagnosed high blood pressure have no idea they have it. The lack of symptoms does not mean that having high blood pressure doesn't have an effect on your body, though. When it is not properly treated, it can cause very serious diseases, including coronary artery disease, heart attack and stroke.

Your blood pressure is a measurement of the force your blood exerts upon your blood vessels as it moves through your body. Typically, blood pressure consists of two numbers. Your systolic blood pressure measures the pressure of as your heart pumps blood; and your diastolic blood pressure measures the pressure when your heart is at rest. Blood pressure can fluctuate throughout the day. It tends to be lower when you are resting or asleep, and higher during periods of activity, stress or excitement. Blood pressure readings are usually presented with the systolic number first, followed by the diastolic number (120/80.) Anything higher than 140/90 is considered high blood pressure.

Most blood pressure does not have a discernible cause. It develops slowly over time. However, in certain cases high blood pressure may develop secondary to another condition. Some examples include alcohol abuse, kidney and adrenal gland problems, illegal drug use, and sleep apnea.

While there is a chance that anybody can develop high blood pressure, there are certain things that make it more likely:

- Age (older people are more prone to get it)
- Race (African-Americans get high blood pressure more than other races)
- Stress
- Smoking
- Family history
- Obesity
- Excessive sodium in the diet
- Deficiencies of Vitamin D or potassium

Treatments for high blood pressure vary. Some people respond well to making simple dietary and lifestyle changes, while others require medication to bring their blood pressure down to safe levels. Some treatment options include:

Thiazide diuretics are drugs that help your body to get rid of excess water and sodium, thus reducing your overall blood volume and lowering your blood pressure

Beta blockers are a class of drugs that help to widen your blood vessels, making it easier for the blood to flow

Angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors help to relax the walls of your blood vessels and may be particularly effective for people with kidney disease

Angiotensin II receptor blockers (ARBs) block the action of a chemical that narrows your blood vessels.

Calcium channel blockers relax the muscles around your blood vessels, and are an effective treatment for older patients

Renin inhibitors slow down your body's production of renin, an enzyme produced in your kidneys that can set off a chain reaction that raises blood pressure

Like all prescription drugs, these medications all have potentially serious side effects. For that reason, it is worth trying to control your blood pressure through diet.

## **The Superfoods That Lower High Blood Pressure**

Hibiscus has been used as an herbal remedy for high blood pressure for years. It acts as a natural diuretic, and it also mimics some of the qualities of ACE inhibitors. It is widely available as an ingredient in herbal teas.

Coconut water has become very popular in recent years as a healthier alternative to sugary electrolyte-replacement drinks. It is naturally high in potassium and magnesium, which help to regulate muscle function. Remember, your heart is a muscle!

Green tea is an antioxidant power house that can lower blood pressure and reduce your levels of LDL cholesterol. It can also help to prevent heart attacks and strokes. Drink 2-3 cups every day to reap the benefits.

Omega-3 is an essential fatty acid that can-do wonders when it comes to high blood pressure. It is frequently prescribed for people who have had heart surgery. In addition to lowering your blood pressure, it decreases triglycerides and increases the levels of HDL cholesterol – that's the good kind.

Watermelon contains an amino acid called citrulline. Once it is in the body, citrulline converts to L-arginine, an amino acid that controls how hard your blood is pumped through your body.

Grapefruit has a high amount of Vitamin C, an antioxidant that can help to prevent damage to blood vessels and lower LDL cholesterol.

When it comes to high blood pressure, an apple a day may "really" be able to keep the doctor away. Apples are a great source of quercetin, a flavonoid that has antioxidant properties. Quercetin helps to prevent free-radical damage in the body, which may lead to hardening of the arteries.

Blueberries are a true superfood that can help with a variety of health issues. Two compounds found in blueberries, anthocyanins and proanthocyanidins, mimic the action of ACE inhibitors and help to relax the walls of your blood vessels.

Brazil nuts. Brazil nuts are delicious, and they are also a great source of two important minerals: selenium and magnesium. These two micronutrients work together to reduce your chance of developing coronary artery disease by as much as 40%.

Broccoli is another food powerhouse. It is packed with phytoestrogens Vitamin C, and it can work wonders in terms of lowering your cholesterol and decreasing your blood pressure. It is important to note that overcooked broccoli loses many of its nutrients. To reap the benefits, eat it raw or lightly steamed or stir-fried.

Garlic contains a compound called allicin, which has been shown to decrease blood pressure, lower LDL cholesterol and protect the heart. If you can eat garlic (some people find that it upsets their stomachs) then simply add more of it to your diet. If you cannot, take garlic capsules instead.

Almonds are the best dietary source of Vitamin E, an antioxidant vitamin that helps to lower LDL cholesterol and strengthen the cardiovascular system.

Because yogurt is fermented, it contains probiotics that act as a natural ACE inhibitor. It is also high in calcium, magnesium and potassium, all of which are necessary for a healthy cardiovascular system.

Bananas are delicious, and they are also naturally low in sodium and high in potassium. Potassium deficiency is a common cause of high blood pressure.

Some studies indicate that in addition to lowering cholesterol, cinnamon can lower blood pressure too. Keep in mind that cinnamon isn't just for desserts. You can add it to coffee, or to savory dishes as well.



In addition to adding these superfoods to your diet, it is also important to do other things to fight high blood pressure. Reduce the amount of sodium in your diet by steering clear of processed foods, and make sure to get exercise on a regular basis. If you do these things, you can get your blood pressure under control without the use of prescription medications.

## **Our Female Healthcare Philosophy**

At the Women's Natural Health Clinic, we specialise in providing comprehensive natural reproductive, gynaecological, obstetric and general healthcare for females from adolescence to post-menopause. Our approach is to integrate techniques in both oriental and western medical diagnosis to formulate a naturally oriented treatment plan combining acupuncture, herbal medicine, naturopathic medicine, nutritional therapy, exercise and lifestyle. Each treatment plan is tailored specifically to each individual woman maximizing results.

Please email us at [enquiries@naturalgynae.com](mailto:enquiries@naturalgynae.com) with questions, we are more than happy to provide any information via email that will assist you in deciding which treatment approach would be best for you

For more information, contact details and appointments click here [www.naturalgynae.com](http://www.naturalgynae.com)