

# Check that pressure

EXERCISING UNDER YOUR PHYSICIAN'S INSTRUCTION IS THE BEST WAY TO KEEP BLOOD PRESSURE NORMAL

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**H**IGH BLOOD pressure (hypertension) has over the years earned the distinction of being a "silent killer" because of the symptoms, which may not show up for years. High blood pressure is defined as the pressure of blood against the walls of the blood vessels and arteries. When the heart contracts it pushes blood through the arteries with varying force. There is a difference between high blood pressure and elevated blood pressure caused by working out, stress and tension. In normal conditions, when out exert the blood pressure may go up, but subsequently it returns to normal. But if the person is suffering from hypertension, the blood pressure is always above normal. It is a difficult situation. One is advised to exercise but at the same time one has to be very careful in choosing the kind of activity one indulges in and the way one does it.

The prevalence of high blood pressure increases with age and is often related to lifestyle and habits. If you're overweight and inactive and you smoke, the risk factor increases. Prolongedly elevated blood pressure can lead to so many health hazards - an enlarged heart, stroke and kidney damage among them - bringing the pressure down is crucial.

When you exercise regularly, your entire cardiovascular system benefits. This is because exercising prevents the onset of high blood pressure if you're at increased risk of developing it. It also lowers your blood pressure if you already have high blood pressure.

Managing your high blood pressure involves making healthier food and exercise choices, and possibly some decisions about medications.

#### Your exercise

Start exercising at your own pace. It is possible to do easily with every bit of exercise that you do. If you do it regularly, you can begin exercising at a pace that's comfortable for you. Doing even for at least three times a week is a good way to help manage your high blood pressure.

Chances are also that you'll feel more energetic. Consider your needs and interests. Your health care professional will work with you and make suggestions about how you can incorporate exercise into your life. After giving you a thorough physical examination and talking with you about your interests, he or she will help you determine which activities are best for your level of fitness.

If you have other medical condi-

tions, such as diabetes or heart disease, in addition to high blood pressure, your health care professional will consider all the information when recommending particular kind of exercise for you. It is also important for him or her to know what type of medication you are taking.

#### Exercise in ways you'll enjoy

You can make exercising easier by finding your own ways to include it in your daily routine. In fact, make it your daily activities probably qualify as exercise you may just need to do them more often.

One way to lower your blood pressure is to take a brisk walk for 30 to 45 minutes several times a week. Walking is a good example of an activity that you can work into your daily routine. For example, you can take your dog for longer walks, park your car further from the grocery store, or even get off the bus a few blocks before your stop. If you find ways to exercise that suit your needs and interests, you'll be likely to work out more often and to reap the benefits of keeping it simple.

#### How do I get started?

Which type of exercise is right for you? Exercise can be divided into three basic types: stretching, cardiovascular (or aerobic), and strengthening. Each type of activity meets different needs and treatment goals. Be sure to discuss your plan with your health care professional or she can help you determine how you can exercise safely and get the most out of it.

#### Stretching before and after exercising

- ☐ Helps prepare the muscles for activity
- ☐ Reduces the likelihood of injuring or straining muscles
- ☐ Can also increase your flexibility

Cardiovascular or aerobic exercise includes walking, jogging, cycling, rowing, skiing, and low-impact aerobics.

- ☐ Strengthens the heart and improves the body's ability to use oxygen
- ☐ Reduces your resting heart rate and blood pressure and improves your breathing as your heart will not have to work as hard during exercise

#### Strengthening exercises

- ☐ Regularly tighten muscles to make them stronger
- ☐ Many strengthening exercises are not recommended for patients with heart conditions, so it's important to consult your health care professional before performing this type of activity

**Make exercising work for you**  
In general, every workout should include these phases: warm-up, conditioning, and



cool down. It is important to perform each one in order to properly prepare your body for exercise and achieve the most from it.

#### Warm-up: preparing for exercise

- ☐ Activities include stretching, flexibility exercises, and beginning your workout at a low-intensity level
- ☐ Helps your body make a slow transition from rest to exercise while improving your flexibility and reducing muscle soreness

#### During this phase, your breathing, heart rate, and body temperature will slowly increase

#### Conditioning: the period of exercise

- ☐ Calories are burned and your body expends the benefits of exercise
- ☐ It's important to be aware of the intensity of your exercise by checking your heart rate. Talk to your health care professional for more information on how to do this.
- ☐ Cool down: gradual recovery from exercise
- ☐ Bring your heart rate and blood pressure back down to pre-exercise levels
- ☐ Decrease the intensity of your activity. You can even include the same stretching activities that you did during your warm-up.

is not the proper way to achieve the benefits of cooling down. Doing so may cause you to feel dizzy or lightheaded.

#### Your medication

Your medication matters, too. Changing your medication and fitness habits for better is an important step in managing your high blood pressure.

#### Simple, safe steps for improving your heart's health

Regular aerobic exercise can lower both systolic and diastolic blood pressure by an average of 30 points. But because exercising makes your heart work harder, you need to be careful, especially if you're just starting or your blood pressure is very high.

**Start slowly.** After stretching or exercising on the day, get up slowly. Some blood pressure medications can cause "orthostatic hypotension," a condition that makes you dizzy when you stand quickly.

**Stop caffeine.** A pot without cup of coffee may cause a spike in blood pressure. Avoid caffeine three to four hours before exercising.

Last but not the least take a go ahead from your physician before undertaking any new physical activity. Doing right activity with controlled intensity and impact, exercising would help everyone with high blood pressure to

## PREVENTION

- ◆ Limit salt intake
- ◆ Reduce stress
- ◆ Increase potassium intake
- ◆ Increase calcium intake
- ◆ Make changes in life style
- ◆ Don't smoke
- ◆ Be active
- ◆ Limit sodium
- ◆ Eat more fruit, whole grains, vegetables
- ◆ Limit alcohol