



GLOBAL HEALTH PHARMACY

ASK YOUR GLOBAL HEALTH PHARMACIST

News from your Global Health Education Center

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YOUR BLOOD PRESSURE AND YOU

No Pressure But Let's Lower your Blood Pressure!

If you've been diagnosed with high blood pressure, your heart is working overtime. Also known as hypertension, high blood pressure not only raises the risk of heart disease, it also increases risks to your arteries, brain, kidneys, and eyes.

If you don't know what your blood pressure is, it's time to find out. Bottom line? High blood pressure can be a silent killer.

Blood pressure measurements give you two readings. The top number is the pressure in your arteries when your heart pumps blood. The bottom number is the pressure in arteries between beats.

What increases blood pressure? As usual, certain risks are outside your control. That includes genetics, age, and a family history of hypertension. In some cases, certain medications can raise blood pressure. Let a Global Health Pharmacist look over a list of your medications to make sure that's not true for you.

In most cases, though, doctors don't know the exact cause. What they do know is that making lifestyle changes can make a big difference.

Here are some things you can do:

1) *Lose a few pounds.*

Even 5 to 10 pounds can make a difference in blood pressure. Belly fat may be the kind that is most likely linked to high blood pressure.

2) *Exercise daily.*

30 to 60 minutes every day of the week can help. You may see a change in your numbers within just a few weeks.

3) *Eating a healthy a diet.*

The Diet Approach to Stop Hypertension (DASH) diet is rich in whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and low-fat dairy products. Go easy with food rich in saturated fats and cholesterol.

4) *Limit salt, alcohol, and caffeine.*

Read food labels, eat fewer processed foods, and don't add salt to your food. Track your habits so you can see exactly how much alcohol and caffeine you drink each week.



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Small amounts of alcohol can actually lower your blood pressure. But more than moderate amounts can do just the opposite.

Likewise, caffeine can also boost blood pressure. Check your pressure 30 minutes after you drink a cup of coffee and see if it's more than 10 points higher than at other times of day.

5) *Go smoke-free.*

Smoking can be a tough habit to kick. If that's true for you, get help to quit for good. And, remember: even second-hand smoke isn't harmless.

6) *Chill out.*

Easier said than done, I know. But stress can temporarily boost your blood pressure. You know better than anyone what helps you relax. Try to build that into your daily (or weekly) routine.

If your doctor gives you medication for high blood pressure, take it exactly as prescribed. But be patient. It can take a while to get your numbers where they need to be. You may also need to try more than one medicine. There are many classes of high blood pressure drugs, and it can get confusing. As you know, your Global Health Pharmacist is here as a resource.

You can't feel blood pressure, so there's only one way to know medicine or a lifestyle change is working: consider buying a blood pressure cuff from Global Health Pharmacy so that you can regularly check your blood pressure.

Nothing herein constitutes medical advice, diagnosis or treatment, or is a substitute for professional advice. You should always seek the advice of your physician or other medical professional if you have questions or concerns about a medical condition.

References:

- 1) AHA: "Keeping High Blood Pressure Under Control." Available at: http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/Conditions/HighBloodPressure/PreventionTreatmentofHighBloodPressure/Keeping-High-Blood-Pressure-Under-Control_UCM_460131_Article.jsp Accessed October 23, 2014
- 2) AHA: "Small weight gain can raise blood pressure in health adult." Available at: <http://newsroom.heart.org/news/small-weight-gain-can-raise-blood-pressure-in-healthy-adults> Accessed October 23, 2014