

AMH Inside Out

High Blood Pressure (Hypertension): The Silent Killer

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High blood pressure, also known as hypertension, is the most common cardiovascular disease. In the United States, 80 million people over age 6 have hypertension (1 in 4 Americans or 1 in 3 adults).

One-third of people with hypertension are unaware that they have it. Hypertension is the leading cause of stroke and a major cause of heart attack.

Blood pressure

The heart pumps blood into the arteries (blood vessels), which circulate it throughout the body. Blood pressure is the force of blood pushing against blood vessel walls as it flows through. The blood pressure is recorded as two numbers. The higher number (systolic) measures the pressure in the arteries when the heart beats and fills them with blood while the second number (diastolic) measures the pressure when the heart rests between beats.

Blood pressure readings can be categorized as:

- Normal: Less than 120/80
- Prehypertension: 120-139/80-89
- Stage 1 hypertension: 140-159/90-99
- Stage 2 hypertension: above 160/100

Causes

In the United States, the cause of hypertension cannot be determined in 95% of cases and this is called essential hypertension. Certain risk factors have been identified including age, race, smoking, diabetes, obesity, sedentary lifestyle, excessively salty diets, excessive alcohol consumption (1 to 2 drinks daily), stress, and insufficient intake of potassium, calcium, and magnesium. Hypertension is usually familial and affects men more than women. Five

percent of cases of hypertension have an underlying cause and is called secondary hypertension. Causes include kidney diseases, adrenal/ thyroid disorders, pregnancy, birth control pills and common cold medicines.

Symptoms

There are usually no symptoms or signs of hypertension (silent killer). The only way to know if you have hypertension is to check your blood pressure. If your blood pressure is extremely high, you may be having a hypertensive crisis and may develop symptoms including severe headache, fatigue or confusion, vision problems, chest pain, difficulty breathing, irregular heartbeat and blood in the urine. You must see a healthcare provider immediately as this could result in a heart attack or stroke.

Diagnosis

Blood pressure readings of 140/90 or higher, taken on at least 2 occasions confirms you have high blood pressure and requires treatment if it remains high. People with blood pressure readings of 200/120 or higher need treatment immediately.

MORE ON HYPERTENSION...

Treatment

Your guide to lowering HBP

Complications

Hypertension damages the major organs in the body and may result in a stroke, heart attack, congestive heart failure, kidney failure, vision problems or even death.



Treatment

Hypertension is treated with lifestyle modification and medications. Lifestyle changes include losing weight (maintaining a healthy weight), stopping smoking, eating a healthy diet with less salt and exercising regularly. Several medications are available for treatment, so ask your doctor about alternatives if you develop intolerable drug side-effects. Diabetics are treated at blood pressures above 135/80 because of increased risk of complications. Home blood pressure monitoring is recommended.

Follow-up care is important. See your healthcare provider periodically as medications may need to be reviewed over time.

Prevention

Check your blood pressure at least once a year to ensure you don't have hypertension. You can help lower your chance of developing hypertension by making lifestyle changes. Consult your healthcare provider before starting an exercise program if you are inactive or over the age of 40 or have chronic health problems.

WebMD Medical Reference from MedicineNet

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MAY

- * [Health & Safety EXPO](#)
(May 20 & 21)
- * [Asthma & Allergy Awareness Month](#)
- * [National Employee Health & Fitness Day](#) (May 21)
- * [Exercise is Medicine](#)

JUNE

- * [National Safety Month](#)
- * [Blood Donor Day - June 14th](#)
- * [Quarterly Health Fairs](#)
(June 4, 9 & 11)

JULY

- * [Health Maintenance Challenge](#)
(July 7—August 1)

Vitamins and Minerals

By Kelly Harnish, BS, CHES, AMH Health Education Specialist

Your body needs vitamins and minerals in small and regular amounts for normal growth, function, and health. Your body can't make most vitamins and minerals, so you must get them from food or dietary supplements.

- Vitamins** are needed for a variety of biological processes, among them growth, digestion and nerve function. Vitamins are involved in many processes that enable your body to use carbohydrates, fats and proteins for energy, growth, and repair. Though vitamins are involved in converting food into energy, they supply no calories.
- Minerals** are the main components in your teeth and bones, serve as building blocks for other cells and enzymes, help regulate the balance of fluids in your body, and control the movement of nerve impulses. Some minerals also help deliver oxygen to cells and help carry away carbon dioxide.

Can you skip your daily servings of fruits and vegetables and take a vitamin and mineral supplement instead? Unfortunately, no.

Dietary supplements are NOT food substitutes, as they can't replace all of the nutrients and benefits of whole foods, such as fruits and vegetables. But dietary supplements can complement your diet if you have trouble getting enough nutrients.

Whole foods: Your best source of vitamins & minerals

Whole foods are your best sources of vitamins and minerals. They offer three main benefits over

dietary supplements:

- Greater nutrition.** Whole foods are complex, containing a variety of the micronutrients your body needs. An orange provides vitamin C but also some beta carotene, calcium, and other nutrients. A vitamin C supplement lacks these other micronutrients.
- Essential fiber,** which helps prevent certain diseases, such as diabetes and heart disease. It can also help manage constipation.
- Protective substances.** Fruits and vegetables contain *phytochemicals*, which may help protect you against cancer, heart disease, diabetes and high blood pressure; and *antioxidants* slow down oxidation, a natural process that leads to cell and tissue damage and may result in cancer. Dietary supplements alone cannot provide these substances.

MORE ON SUPPLEMENTS:

[Vitamin & Mineral Supplement Facts](#)

[AHA Scientific Position](#)

Who needs dietary supplements?

For some people, including those on restrictive diets, dietary supplements can provide vitamins and minerals that their diets often don't. Pregnant women and older adults have altered nutrient needs and may also benefit from a dietary supplement.

Choosing and using supplements

If you decide to take a vitamin or mineral supplement, consider these factors:

Talk with your doctor about any concerns he or

she may have about interactions between your current medication(s) and the supplement you are considering.

- Read labels carefully** for active ingredients, nutrients, and serving size.
- Avoid supplements that provide megadoses.** In general, choose a multivitamin-mineral supplement — for example, Centrum, One-A-Day, others — that provides about 100 percent of the Daily Value (DV) of all the vitamins and minerals, rather than one which has, for example, 500 percent of the DV for one vitamin and only 20 percent of the DV for another. The exception to this is calcium. You may notice that calcium containing supplements don't provide 100 percent of the DV. If they did, the tablets would be too large to swallow.
- Look for 'USP' on the label.** This ensures that the supplement meets the standards for strength, purity, disintegration and dissolution established by the testing organization U.S. Pharmacopeia (USP).
- Beware of gimmicks.** Synthetic vitamins are usually the same as "natural" vitamins, but "natural" vitamins usually cost more. Also, added herbs, enzymes or amino acids cost more and may interact negatively with certain medications.
- Look for expiration dates.** If a supplement doesn't have an expiration date, don't buy it. If your supplements have expired, discard them.
- Store all vitamin and mineral supplements** in a dry, cool place. Avoid hot, humid locations, such as the bathroom. Also, store supplements away from children and pets.

Adapted from information from the Mayo Clinic



Healthy Recipes

CRISPY POTATO SKINS

Serves 2

2 medium russet potatoes
Butter-flavored cooking spray
1 tablespoon minced fresh rosemary
1/8 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
Preheat the oven to 375 F.



Wash the potatoes and pierce with a fork. Place in the oven and bake until the skins are crisp, about 1 hour. Carefully — potatoes will be very hot — cut the potatoes in half and

Dietitian's tip: You can use any number of herbs or spices to season the potato skins. Try fresh basil, chives, dill, garlic, cayenne pepper, caraway seed, tarragon or thyme.

scoop out the pulp, leaving about 1/8 inch of the potato flesh attached to the skin. Save the pulp for another use. Spray the inside of each potato skin with butter-flavored cooking spray. Press in the rosemary and pepper. Return the skins to the oven for 5 to 10 minutes. Serve immediately.

SERVING SIZE: 2 POTATO SKIN HALVES

Calories	114
Fiber	4 g
Cholesterol	0 mg
Potassium	332 mg
Sodium	12 mg
Protein	2 g
Carbohydrate	27 g
Calcium	20 mg
Total fat	0 g
Saturated fat	0 g
Monounsaturated fat	0 g

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