

High Blood Pressure

overall health, not just your blood pressure. Try to avoid processed and packaged foods such as potato chips and many other store-bought snacks. Replace them with low-fat snacks such as fruit and vegetables. Many canned, frozen or packaged foods are also high in sodium. Get in the habit of reading package labels to identify what foods to avoid. Season your foods with herbs, spices and pepper instead of salt. A healthy diet will lead to a healthy future.

Don't smoke - By quitting smoking you will live a longer and healthier life. Smoking is linked to a long list of health problems. High blood pressure is only one of the items on the list. If you are having difficulty quitting, talk to your doctor or PharmaChoice pharmacist. They can provide you with information on quitting techniques that will assist you in breaking your smoking habit.

Manage your stress - Stress can increase your blood pressure; so if you are constantly under stress, your blood pressure may tend to be high. Managing your stress will also reduce your anxiety and improve your sense of well-being.

Reduce alcohol consumption - Alcohol abuse accounts for about 10 percent of high blood pressure cases. It can reduce the effectiveness of some high blood pressure medications, and it is also related to stroke and liver disease. Drinking in moderation, less than 2 ounces a day, has little effect on blood pressure; however if you are a heavy drinker or a binge drinker, high blood

pressure can be a major issue, talk to your doctor if you are concerned about your alcohol consumption.

These lifestyle modifications have proven to reduce the risk of developing high blood pressure in many people, have significantly lowered high blood pressure in other people and can improve overall health in people in general.

What about blood pressure medications?

If you develop severe hypertension, it is often treated with medication in conjunction with lifestyle modification. There are several different types of medications to treat high blood pressure. They don't cure the problem-they only control it. Your doctor will consider various factors before deciding which medication is best for you. It is important to take your medication as directed. If you have any questions regarding your high blood pressure medication, talk to your PharmaChoice pharmacist. He or she will be happy to provide answers and address any concerns.



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What is blood pressure?

Blood pressure is a measure of the pressure or force that your blood applies on the walls of your blood vessels as it moves through your body. A blood pressure reading has 2 numbers such as 120 over 80, which is a

typical normal blood pressure. The first number measures the pressure when the heart contracts and pushes blood. The second number measures the pressure when the heart relaxes and is refilling with blood.

Why worry about high blood pressure?



Blood pressure can go up and down at different times. It goes up when you smoke a cigarette and when you are excited or

stressed, but it usually returns to normal after the triggering event has passed. If your blood pressure is high all the time, the constant pressure can damage blood vessels and organs including the heart, the brain and the kidneys. The medical term for high blood pressure is hypertension. It is considered one of the most serious health problems in North America. High blood pressure is one of the highest risk factors for heart disease, and the most important risk factor for stroke. It is also a common cause of kidney disease and can damage blood vessels in the eyes, leading to blindness. High blood pressure is also linked to leg and feet problems caused by impaired blood flow, resulting in difficulty walking, and the loss of bone density leading to osteoporosis especially in post-menopausal women.

Who is at risk of developing high blood pressure?

High blood pressure can strike anyone at anytime, but certain characteristics have been identified as higher risk factors. You may be at greater risk of developing hypertension if you:

- Have a history of hypertension in your family
- Are of African decent
- Smoke
- Are overweight
- Eat foods high in cholesterol and sodium
- Do not exercise regularly
- Are under constant stress
- Drink a lot of alcohol
- Are diabetic

About 90 percent of the people who have high blood pressure have what is called primary hypertension. The cause is not actually known; but it is suspected that a combination of lifestyle, diet, heredity, age, gender, hormone levels and other factors contribute to this type of high blood pressure. Secondary hypertension is a form of high blood pressure that has a definite cause. About 5 to 10 percent of people with high blood pressure have this form. Causes can be pregnancy, hormonal diseases, kidney disease, head injuries, or the use of certain medications.

What are the symptoms of high blood pressure?

Over 25 percent of Canadian men and 18 percent of Canadian women have high blood pressure. Although it is very dangerous, many people don't know they have it because it usually has no symptoms. It is only discovered during a medical checkup or when the damage to organs such as the heart or brain has occurred. Prior to 1900, people didn't have to worry about high blood pressure, heart disease and stroke because life was more physically demanding and diets consisted mainly of home-grown food. Today, however, technological advances have replaced much of our manual labour with machines and created processed high-fat, high sodium foods

that are now staples in our diets. Our lives have become easier, more sedate and less healthy.

How can I control my blood pressure?

Lifestyle changes are the key to controlling and preventing high blood pressure. By changing your lifestyle, you will greatly reduce your chances of developing heart disease, stroke and other ailments related to hypertension. The following lifestyle modifications are recommended to counteract high blood pressure:

Maintain a healthy weight - Losing as little as 10 pounds can lower blood pressure in some people. In addition, a healthy weight will also reduce your risk of developing heart disease, high cholesterol and diabetes.

Become physically active - Increasing physical activity is a major factor in controlling blood pressure, reducing the risks of heart disease, high cholesterol, and diabetes, along with reducing your stress level. Walking is the easiest, cheapest and most enjoyable way to increase your physical activity. You can start by getting a comfortable, good fitting pair of walking shoes. Begin with just a short walk and build up to longer periods. You will notice a big difference in your physical and mental well-being and you will make a big difference to your future health.

Eat Healthy - Diet is another key to maintaining a healthy blood pressure level. Reducing foods that are high in cholesterol, high in saturated fats and high in sodium will greatly improve your



High blood pressure is one of the highest risk factors for heart disease heart disease is the number one cause of death in Canada each year.