

Hypertension and Diet

by Raymond Francis

Hypertension is the most common chronic medical condition in America. About 25% of all adults and 50% of people over age 60 have high blood pressure. This is a silent disease that kills. People can go for years without symptoms, yet the effects of hypertension can be devastating. The risk of stroke is eight times higher and heart attack three times higher. There is also higher risk for kidney disease and even blindness.

A new study called the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) has come to some startling conclusions regarding hypertension and diet. It seems that eating a diet high in fruits and vegetables and low in saturated fat will both prevent hypertension as well as cure it. At a meeting of the annual scientific sessions of the American Heart Association, Dr. Thomas J. Moore said, "Widespread adoption of the...low-fat diet...would prevent many new cases of hypertension and reduce or eliminate the need for drug therapy in large numbers of patients."

In epidemiological studies of populations around the world, it was found that people who eat diets rich in minerals and fiber while low in saturated fat have low rates of hypertension. The diet featured in the DASH study contained 9 servings of fruits and vegetables per day while the typical American diet contains only 3.5 servings.

The DASH diet was particularly effective in lowering blood pressure in people with mild hypertension. The pressures fell by an average of 11.4/5.5 mm Hg within the first two weeks and stayed low thereafter. Dr. Moore said, "That's an effect that's far beyond what we might expect with single drug therapy..." Lowering blood pressure in our population would have a significant effect on lowering the incidence of stroke and coronary events. Eating a better diet would also have a positive effect on all other diseases.

In addition to eliminating animal protein and fats and eating more fresh fruits and vegetables, there are other things than can be done to help lower blood pressure. Drink more water every day. Sharply reduce salt intake, not to exceed 1000 mg. of sodium per day. Reduce alcohol consumption, alcohol raises blood pressure for some reason. Supplement with magnesium, about 200 mg. of magnesium per meal. Beyond Health Bone Mineral Support would be the supplement of choice. Lose weight and get plenty of exercise. In addition, eating garlic or taking garlic supplements every day has been shown to reduce blood pressure. For this we recommend Kyolic® Aged Garlic Extract (available at Beyond Health).

Naturally if your blood pressure is high and you are already taking an antihypertensive drug, you need to work with your doctor to gradually come off of the drug onto a natural approach. A natural approach is not only safer but more effective. If you are on drugs, you should be aware that these antihypertensives are toxic poisons that will damage your health.

One type of hypertension drug is called a diuretic. This causes the patient to urinate more. However, they also cause the body to lose precious minerals in the urine such as magnesium, calcium, potassium, zinc, and iodine. Since the average person, and especially the hypertensive, are already short essential minerals, this additional loss can precipitate spasms in your arteries, stroke, irregular heart rhythms, and even heart attacks. One out of four people over age 65 take diuretics, and studies have shown an increase in the death rate of the people taking these dangerous chemicals.

Another class of drug is called a beta blocker. While diuretics poison your kidneys, beta blockers are designed to poison your heart. They relax the blood vessels and weaken the heart in order to lower the blood pressure. A third class of drug is called a calcium channel blocker. This blocks the entry of calcium into artery cell walls and causes them to become more relaxed. BHN suspects we may yet find out that these drugs have played a major role in the dramatic increase in congestive heart failure in America.

The new DASH evidence as well as lots of older evidence all tell us that eating a good diet will both prevent and cure hypertension. Drugs only treat symptoms while damaging health. Hypertension is just one more disease that modern diets have created. The choice is to take these dangerous drugs or eat more fresh fruits and vegetables and less saturated fat!

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