

Telling The Truth About High Blood Pressure!

*What your doctor doesn't know
about high blood pressure
could kill you!*

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High blood pressure, also known as “**hypertension**,” is the number one reason people visit their doctor in the United States. Each year, more than 100 million doctor visits are made for the medical management of this condition. High blood pressure is both a sign, as well as a causal factor, in heart attacks, strokes, and congestive heart failure, which makes it the leading associated cause of death and disability in westernized societies.

Medical doctors overwhelmingly recommend drug therapy for this condition, making blood pressure drugs the number one prescriptive medication in this country. But is drug therapy the best approach? And, is it safe?

There are many popular medical myths about high blood pressure. For example, many physicians believe that high blood pressure is an “inevitable consequence of aging”; that the “only viable treatment option for high blood pressure patients is medication”; that high blood pressure patients must take their medications “for the rest of their lives”; and, worst of all, that high blood pressure medications are “safe and effective.” This article will show that drug treatment is not the only viable treatment option, and that drug treatment is disturbingly dangerous. In fact, studies strongly suggest that for the majority of patients with high blood pressure, medications may be more dangerous than doing nothing at all.

Fortunately, there exist powerful diet and lifestyle treatment options that safely and effectively

reduce high blood pressure. But don't assume that your doctor will tell you about them—because many doctors are simply unaware of the facts. Before exploring how to safely treat this condition, let's look at what high blood pressure is, and seek to understand why it is our nation's number one public health concern. In doing so, it will become clear why medical management is generally so ineffective, and why a safer, more effective approach—one which takes advantage of the human body's built-in healing mechanisms—is often the best choice.

What is blood pressure?

Although high blood pressure does not cause any pain, and cannot be detected without a special device, it is clearly a serious health problem worthy of your rapt attention. But what is “blood pressure,” and what can cause it to become “high”?

If you have ever been in a hot tub with the “jets” on, you have observed a circulating system. When the pump is “on,” the water circulates from the hot tub, through pipes, into a pump, and then back to the hot tub. In this way, the water can be put through a filter to remove impurities, and be re-utilized, again and again. A hot tub with its pump “on” is a simple circulatory system. When the pump is “off,” the water stops circulating and stays wherever it is in the system.

Your circulatory system is very much like the hot tub's. Your blood is like the water. Your heart is like the pump, and your blood vessels are like the pipes. Your heart pumps your blood through the circulatory system in order to feed oxygen and nutrients to cells throughout your body, and to remove waste products. By circulating through the system, your blood is filtered, and re-utilized, again and again.

In a hot tub, as the water comes through the pipes it has a degree of force. This force is caused by the action of the pump, which puts energy into the circulating system and forces the water through the pipes. When the pump is off, there still may be water in the pipes, but there is no force. The degree of force in the system when the pump is

on can be gauged in a number of ways, such as by putting your hand in front of a "jet." Another way would be to have a device to measure the amount of force that the water exerts against the walls of the pipes as it circulates. Such a device might yield a numerical measurement of the force, or pressure, of the water within the pipes.

Similarly, your blood exerts a force against the walls of your blood vessels as it circulates through your body. The degree of this force is called your "blood pressure," and it can be measured with a blood pressure monitoring device. Unlike the water pressure in the hot tub, however, human blood pressure is highly variable. In the hot tub, the water ejected by the jets comes in a steady, pressurized stream. But in the human circulatory system, blood pressure varies dramatically from one moment to the next.

Unlike the smooth action of the hot tub pump, the human heart expands and contracts mightily each second or so, causing your blood pressure to be comparatively high one moment, and comparatively low in the next. That is why we need two measurements when checking your blood pressure—one at the moment when the pressure is highest (your systolic blood pressure), and one a moment later, when the pressure is lowest (your diastolic blood pressure).

Your systolic blood pressure is always higher than your diastolic blood pressure, and is always the "top" number when your pressure is reported. If your doctor tells you that your blood pressure is "120 over 80," this means that your systolic blood pressure was measured at "120," and your diastolic was at "80." Both your systolic and diastolic blood pressure measurements are important because they indicate how well your circulatory system is working. If either of these measurements is unusually high, this warrants your serious attention. Because, as previously mentioned, elevated blood pressure may be not only a sign of cardiovascular disease, it is a cause of disease, as well.

How high is "high"?

There are really no cut-and-dried definitions for

high blood pressure. Researchers have used several different criteria to determine at what level a person's blood pressure should be considered "high." One very useful criterion is the concept that blood pressure is "high" when it reaches a level that corresponds to significantly elevated risk for heart attack, stroke, or congestive heart failure. One misguided criterion is the idea that blood pressure is "high" only when it reaches a level that can be effectively assisted by drug therapy.

Over the years, these and other criteria have been bandied about, with the final result being a set of definitions that are not based upon any specific criteria, but are still useful for communication purposes. Your blood pressure is said to be "high" when either your systolic blood pressure is 140 or above, or your diastolic blood pressure is 90 or above, or both. So if your blood pressure is found to be 142/88 (systolic = 142, diastolic = 88), you are diagnosed as having high blood pressure, according to current definitions. The same would be true if your blood pressure was found to be 135/92, or 152/95. In each case, either the systolic is high, or the diastolic is high, or both. Any of these findings results in a diagnosis of high blood pressure.

Most people who are diagnosed with high blood pressure have what is referred to as "mild" high blood pressure. This means that their systolic blood pressure is between 140-159, and/or their diastolic blood pressure is between 90-99. Only when blood pressures are above 160/100 is a patient considered to have "moderate" blood pressure, and, at even higher levels, "severe." These definitions can be quite misleading, and are undoubtedly leading to many entirely preventable tragedies.

Deadly definitions

What is considered "normal" is often pathological. For example, if a person has blood pressure of 136/88 it is considered "normal," or perhaps "high normal," based on the fact that it is below the arbitrary 140/90 numbers. But such an individual has five times the risk of stroke of a person with blood pressure at 110/70! In fact, one-third of the people who die of heart attacks, strokes, and

congestive heart failure have blood pressures that are below 140/90. The current definitions of "normal" or "high normal" may give patients a false sense of security that may very well cost them their lives.

According to current classification, even a person whose blood pressure has risen to 156/98 is considered to have only "mild" high blood pressure. Yet, this level is much more dangerous than even 136/88. Sadly, the majority of people who die of heart attacks, strokes, and congestive heart failure have blood pressure described as either "normal" or "mildly high."

Problems with drugs

The current convention of diagnosing blood pressure as "high" beginning at 140/90 has created another set of problems. Most doctors have been taught that once a diagnosis of "high blood pressure" has been made, blood pressure medication is the treatment of choice. As a result, many physicians believe that the current definition of "high" blood pressure is also the same level of blood pressure at which drug treatments are worthwhile. Unfortunately, this is not the case.

In multiple studies conducted by world leaders in high blood pressure research, drug treatments have been found to be surprisingly ineffective. In fact, there is no clear evidence that drug therapy reduces the risk of death in patients with "mild" high blood pressure—which is the majority of diagnosed patients! In summarizing the results of one of the largest clinical trials ever conducted—performed by the prestigious British Medical Research Council—it was reported that for mildly hypertensive patients, "...Active (drug) treatment had no evident effect on the overall cause of mortality..." In a subsequent review of the entire scientific literature, the British Medical Journal concluded that there is "no appreciable benefit to an individual patient from treating (with drugs) a diastolic pressure of less than 100...." What these scientists found was that while drug treatments for mild hypertension may be effective at lowering blood pressure, they were not effective in reducing overall mortality. Put more bluntly, hypertension

patients in these studies died at about the same rate whether they took medication or not. These findings reaffirm an important health principle—**treating the symptoms of disease is not the same thing as causing health.**

It also would appear that the dangerous "side effects" of **high blood pressure drugs** are sufficiently substantial to obliterate any positive effects of reducing mild high blood pressure in this artificial manner. In fact, **the side effects of medications are sufficiently toxic** that leading medical authorities suggest that medications only become worth the risks when blood pressure becomes "moderately to severely elevated" (160/100 or above). Typical side effects of high blood pressure medications range from mildly unpleasant to lethal. These include fatigue, gastric irritation, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, dizziness, headache, impotence, depression, and congestive heart failure.

Don't assume that your doctor is aware of these facts. If you are diagnosed with mild high blood pressure, you likely will be prescribed medication, instructed that it is helpful, and told that you must take it for the rest of your life. **But before accepting this potentially dangerous treatment,** it may be to your advantage to seek answers to the following questions: **"What caused my high blood pressure?"** and **"Can I remove those causes and reverse this condition?"**

Causes of high blood pressure

Think back for a moment to the circulatory system in a hot tub. When the system is working as designed, there is a certain level of water pressure in the system. However, we could arrange things that would increase this level of pressure. One way would be to partially clog the pipes. In this way, the pressure in the whole system would rise, just as the water pressure in your garden hose rises when you put your finger over the spout and impede the flow.

In the human circulatory system, it also is possible to "clog the pipes." By consuming a diet that is excessive in fats, cholesterol, and

animal proteins, it is possible to develop atherosclerosis—a condition of fatty deposits in the cardiovascular system. Over time, people can build up such significant deposits that their “pipes” are clogged up, to some degree. This is one of the main causes of high blood pressure, and is one reason why high blood pressure tends to become more prevalent as people age. But this condition is not inevitable. More encouraging still is the finding, by Dr. Dean Ornish and others, **that this condition is reversible with dietary and lifestyle modifications**, the first step of which is to adopt a plant-based diet derived from whole, natural foods.

While “clogging the pipes” is a major cause of high blood pressure, there are other causes, as well. A second major factor is that excessive dietary salt causes there to be too much fluid in the circulatory system. Consider once again the analogy of the garden hose. If you turn on the water “harder,” there is more pressure in the hose. Excessive salt in the diet can result in excessive fluid volume in the blood, which results in elevating blood pressure. This cause, too, is reversible, as a plant-based diet of whole, natural foods—**devoid of added salt**—is naturally low in sodium chloride.

We can see that **two major causes of high blood pressure—atherosclerosis and excessive fluid in the circulatory system**—are reversible, given dietary modifications. Such modifications directly address the causes of high blood pressure, and thus might be expected to be quite effective. The curious reader might wish to know just how effective such dietary modifications are, as compared to the drug treatments offered by most doctors. A summary of results from a variety of studies on diet and lifestyle modifications, as compared with drug treatment, appears in Figure 1.

Some impressive results

As you can see in Figure 1, dietary and lifestyle modifications are very impressive as compared with drug treatment. In a study conducted by Dr. John McDougall and his colleagues, a program utilizing a moderately low-sodium, vegetarian diet with moderate exercise resulted in an average

blood pressure reduction of 17/13 in just eleven days! This is particularly striking when we compare these results with medications, which have been found to reduce blood pressure only about 12/6 points, on average. This should be encouraging for those who have been told that they must take blood pressure medication for the rest of their lives.

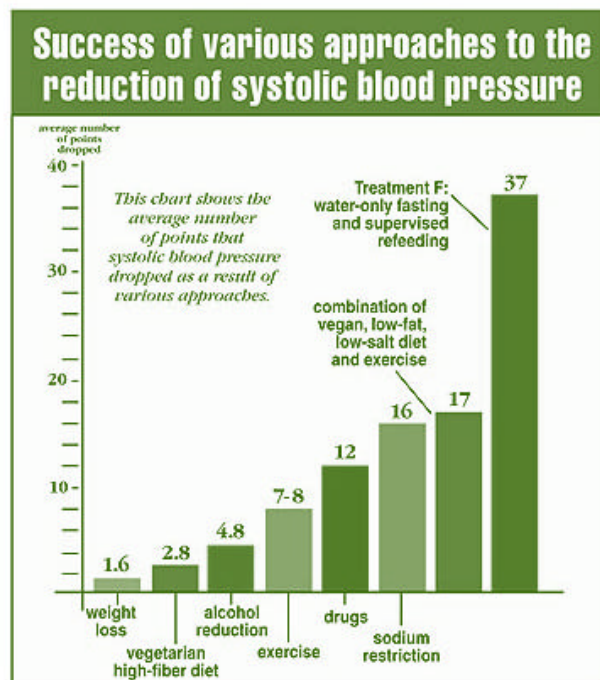


Figure 1

It is notable that relaxation and meditation, though useful for many purposes, have not been found to impact high blood pressure. Many people find this surprising, possibly since high blood pressure also is known as “hypertension.” Because of this potentially misleading term, **many people have assumed that high levels of stress or “tension” is a major cause of “hypertension,” or high blood pressure. This is not the case.** High blood pressure is an essentially mechanical, and not psychological, problem. The causes are most often some combination of clogged “pipes” and excessive salt in the diet. **Lifestyle changes, such as appropriate diet and exercise, are among the most effective treatment strategies. Relaxation, meditation, and otherwise “taking it easy” are not effective solutions**—as valuable as such strategies may be for your psychological well-being.

As you examine Figure 1, you may observe that the real key to the treatment of high blood pressure is to practice a diversity of health-promoting behaviors. By avoiding alcohol use, stopping smoking, switching to a high-fiber, low-sodium, vegan-vegetarian diet, and engaging in moderate, regular exercise, the problem of high blood pressure usually will eliminate itself. However, as alluded to in the beginning of this article, high blood pressure is not only a sign of distress in your cardiovascular system, but also a cause.

If your blood pressure is elevated above what is normal and healthy for our species, the pressure itself causes damage to arterial walls of your circulatory system—which can facilitate the build-up of atherosclerosis and, thus, exacerbate the high blood pressure condition itself. For this reason, it can be useful to reduce high blood pressure as quickly as possible, rather than to patiently wait for the often moderate healing pace of healthful lifestyle changes.

Fast way back to health

Is there a safe and effective way to rapidly normalize blood pressure? Indeed there is, and the results of this method represent nothing less than a breakthrough in the treatment of this condition. The power of this method is hinted at in Figure 1—the method referred to as Treatment F.

As you can see from Figure 1, there is one treatment option that significantly outperforms all others—labeled Treatment F. Treatment F is not a new drug treatment. Neither is it a new, expensive, and patented dietary supplement. It is supervised water-only fasting, a technique that allows for the induction of a potent, natural, adaptive, healing process in a professionally monitored environment. This technique is known to surprisingly few health professionals, though it has proved valuable in the treatment of a wide variety of health problems. Recently, this powerful technique has been shown to be an extremely effective method for allowing the body to rapidly normalize high blood pressure—more effectively than any other treatment reported in the scientific literature.

It may seem incredible to many that supervised water-only fasting can obtain such impressive results. In fact, most people, including most doctors, simply will not believe that such a simple procedure can be so powerful. Few suspect that the body is so capable of healing itself in this way. For this reason, Dr. Alan Goldhamer and his colleagues at the Center for Conservative Therapy set out to carefully document the effectiveness of supervised water-only fasting, and to report the results to the scientific community in a way that other doctors might find convincing. In order to assist him in this task, Dr. Goldhamer and his research staff at the Center sought the help of one of the world's leading nutritional biochemists, Professor T. Colin Campbell of Cornell University.

Fortunately, Dr. Campbell and his statistical expert, Dr. Banoo Parpia, were enthusiastic about joining the research effort. This collaboration has resulted in one of the most remarkable studies in the treatment of hypertension ever conducted. The results will appear in the article, "Medically Supervised Water-Only Fasting in the Treatment of Hypertension," scheduled for publication in early 2001 in the *Journal of Manipulative and Physiological Therapeutics*.

Powerful findings

In the study, funded in part by a grant from the National Health Association, it was discovered that by having patients consume nothing but pure water in a supervised environment of complete rest, blood pressures rapidly normalized. In fact, many patients who began their fasts while on high blood pressure drugs were required to quickly discontinue their medications, so that their blood pressures would not drop artificially low!

Over a twelve-year period, 174 patients diagnosed with mild to severe high blood pressure were seen at the Center for Conservative Therapy, and were placed on a medically-supervised, water-only fasting regime. The treatment procedure included an average water-only fasting period of 10.6 days, followed by a supervised refeeding period of about one week with a whole, natural foods diet. The results of the study are summarized in Figure 2.

In the final analysis, this safe and simple procedure demonstrated extraordinary effectiveness. By the end of their stay, all patients were able to discontinue their medications, no matter how severe their initial condition. In fact, a review of Figure 2 indicates that the most impressive results were observed with the most serious cases. In cases of "moderate" to "severe" hypertension (blood pressures of 174/93 or greater), the average reduction at the conclusion of treatment was a remarkable 46/15! For these cases, which medical practitioners generally would insist need lifetime medical intervention, the average exit blood pressure was 128/78—using no medication whatsoever!

Though the details are incompletely understood, the clinical results are clear and convincing. Water-only fasting represents an astonishing breakthrough in the treatment of high blood pressure, with the only "side effects" being that people lose weight and feel great.

For the rest of your life

Contrary to what many people have been led to believe, high blood pressure is not a condition that requires patients to take drugs for the rest of their lives. If you suffer from this silent but serious condition, start taking effective actions today. As described above, there are many things that you can do to assist your body in regaining a healthy level of blood pressure. In particular, the first thing to do is to adopt a diet consisting of whole, natural foods—such as fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains and legumes, and the variable addition of nuts and seeds. Remember, the optimal diet excludes any added salt, since it is a particularly troubling component of the high blood pressure problem. In addition, this diet has been shown to aid in the reversal of atherosclerosis, and in weight reduction. Other important factors that will help to normalize blood pressure include regular exercise and the elimination of alcohol and tobacco. When followed diligently, such a combined strategy is likely to be very effective.

For those who wish to address their high blood pressure problem quickly, powerfully, and safely, supervised water-only fasting has been shown to be a safe and effective tool for the rapid normalization of blood pressure. Follow-up data from the Center for Conservative Therapy study has shown that after several months, patients who adhere to a healthful dietary regimen are able to sustain their improvements. In addition, water-only fasting is a useful method for helping people to re-educate their palates. This can make it easier for you to fully enjoy a simpler, more health-promoting diet and the benefits of vibrant, unmedicated, health—for the rest of your life.

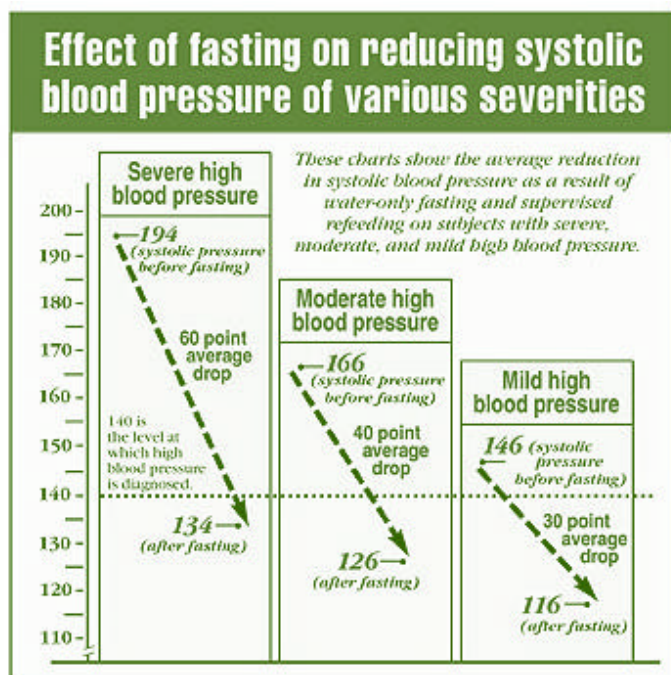


Figure 2

The reasons for this astonishing success are not yet entirely understood. Certainly, two of the major causes of high blood pressure are being addressed: excessive dietary salt is completely eliminated, and it is likely that some patients experience some reversal of the atherosclerosis process. However, Dr. Campbell has suggested that additional mechanisms may be partly responsible for fasting's remarkable effects—such as the rapid reduction of a phenomenon known as "insulin resistance."

Addendum:

More about the study

The fasting and high blood pressure study described in this article was funded in part by a grant from the National Health Association. It was conducted at the Center for Conservative Therapy in Penngrove, Calif. The results appeared in the article, "Medically Supervised Water-Only Fasting in the Treatment of Hypertension," in 2001 in the Journal of Manipulative and Physiological Therapeutics.

WARNING:

The Information in these articles are not intended to replace medical advice or treatment. Questions about symptoms, specific dietary needs and medications, general or specific, should be discussed with your physician. The information in this article is for informational purposes only, and is not medical advice or a substitute for a physician's consultation and/or examination.

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