

NUTRITION NEWS

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Healthy Heart Month

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Most of us have heard the term “high blood pressure”, but you may not know what that means is happening in your body. You may also not be aware of the other physiological changes high blood pressure can precipitate.

High blood pressure is a common condition in which the force of the blood against your artery walls is high enough that it may eventually cause health problems, such as heart disease. It is determined by the amount of blood your heart pumps and the amount of resistance to blood flow in your arteries. Therefore, the more blood your heart pumps and the narrower your arteries, the higher your blood pressure.

Often, there are no symptoms associated with hypertension. However, even without symptoms, your heart and blood vessels may be damaged. Uncontrolled high blood pressure increases your risk of both heart attacks and stroke.

Few people experience symptoms with early stage hypertension. These symptoms may include dull headaches, dizzy spells, or a few

more nosebleeds than usual. These signs and symptoms don’t usually appear until hypertension has reached a severe or life-threatening stage.

For most adults, there is no identifiable cause of high blood pressure. This type of high blood pressure is called essential, or primary, hypertension. This type of high blood pressure tends to develop gradually over many years. Secondary hypertension is high blood pressure caused by an underlying condition. .

Secondary hypertension tends to appear suddenly and generally causes higher blood pressure than primary hypertension. Various conditions and medications can lead to secondary hypertension including the following:

- * Kidney problems
- * Adrenal gland tumors
- * Thyroid problems
- * Certain defects in blood vessels you’re born with (congenital)

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MONTHLY EXERCISE



LOVE HANDLES

Sit up straight in your chair. Inhale, and lengthen your spine. Exhale as you twist to the right, placing your left hand on your right knee. Hold for 15 to 30 seconds, feeling the stretch. Repeat on the opposite side.

- * Certain medications (such as birth control pills, cold remedies, decongestants, over the counter pain relievers, and some prescription drugs)
- * Alcohol abuse or chronic alcohol use
- * Obstructive sleep apnea

Certain subsets of the population are at higher risk of developing hypertension. These risk factors include:

- * Age: the risk of high blood pressure increases with age. Through early middle age, high blood pressure is more common in men. After the age of 65 however, women are more likely to have high blood pressure.
- * Race: high blood pressure is more common among African Americans than it is among Caucasians. It often develops earlier in African Americans, as well as having more serious complications including stroke, heart attack, and kidney failure.
- * Family history: hypertension tends to run in families.
- * Being overweight or obese: the more you weigh, the more blood you need to circulate throughout your body.
- * Using tobacco: the chemicals in tobacco can damage the lining of the artery walls.
- * Too much sodium in your diet: this can cause fluid retention, which increases your blood pressure.
- * Too little potassium in your diet: potassium helps balance the amount of sodium in your cells.
- * Too little Vitamin D in your diet: Vitamin D may affect an enzyme produced by the kidneys that affects your blood pressure.
- * Drinking too much alcohol: heavy drinking can damage your heart over time.
- * Stress: high levels of stress can temporarily increase your blood pressure.

- * Certain chronic conditions: examples include kidney disease (as they are instrumental in regulating blood pressure) and sleep apnea.
- * Not being physically active: people who are inactive tend to have higher heart rates, which in turn puts more stress on your arteries. Physically inactive people also tend to be overweight.

Diet and intake can impact your blood pressure. Being conscious of your overall intake, as well as your sodium intake, can improve your blood pressure. The DASH diet is one specific diet plan that physicians may recommend to help bring your hypertension under control. DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) focuses on including foods that are low in sodium. It also incorporates foods that are rich in potassium, magnesium, and calcium, as these nutrients are also believed to play a role in maintaining a healthy blood pressure. The DASH diet features foods such as vegetables, fruits, low-fat dairy products, whole grains, fish, poultry, and nuts. It also recommends limiting your intake of red meat, sweets, and sugary beverages. It is not surprising that this diet is similar to the general recommendations put forth to reduce your risk of heart disease, diabetes, and certain types of cancers.

You can slowly incorporate the DASH diet into your current dietary habits. Here are some tips to making a gradual, but hopefully lasting, change.

- Add a vegetable or fruit serving at lunch and dinner.
- Use only half the butter or margarine that you use now.
- Get added nutrients such as the B vitamins by choosing whole grain foods, including whole wheat bread or whole grain cereals.

- Spread out the servings: have two servings of fruits or vegetables at each meal, or add fruits as snacks.
- Treat meat as one part of the meal instead of the focus. Try casseroles, pastas, and stir-fry dishes. Try to have two meatless meals per week.
- Use fruits or low-fat foods such as yogurt as desserts or snacks.

If you're also trying to lose weight while on the DASH diet keep these calorie saving tips in mind.

- ◆ Use low fat condiments, such as low fat or lite salad dressings.
- ◆ Eat smaller portions— cut back gradually.
- ◆ Choose low fat or fat free dairy products to reduce your total fat intake.
- ◆ Limit foods with lots of added sugars, such as pies, flavored yogurts, candy bars, ice cream, sherbet, regular soft drinks, and fruit drinks.
- ◆ Eat fruits canned in their own juice, as opposed to those canned in heavy syrups.
- ◆ Snack on fruit, vegetable sticks, unbuttered or unsalted popcorn, or bread sticks.
- ◆ Drink water or club soda.

Even simple changes such as reducing your overall intake (without actually changing the type of foods you're eating) can significantly reduce your blood pressure. Don't forget the importance of portion size.

Lastly, not everyone has to worry about high blood pressure. There are people whose blood pressure is too low, which is known as hypotension. Symptoms of low blood pressure include dizziness or light headedness, fainting, lack of concentration, blurred vision, nausea, cold clammy pale skin, rapid shallow breathing, fatigue, depression, or thirst. If you are an individual whose blood pressure is consistently low,

chances are your doctor will just continue to monitor you regularly. However, if you have suddenly developed low blood pressure, along with symptoms, you may have an underlying cause of the hypotension. Some medical conditions that may cause hypotension include the following:

- ◆ Heart problems: low heart rate, heart valve problems, and heart attack
- ◆ Endocrine problems: thyroid conditions, low blood sugar, and diabetes
- ◆ Dehydration: fever, vomiting, diarrhea, and use of diuretics can call cause dehydration
- ◆ Blood loss: can be caused by a major illness, surgery, or internal bleeding
- ◆ Severe infection: septicemia can occur if an infection enters your bloodstream
- ◆ Lack of nutrient in your diet: Vitamins B12 and folate are especially important in maintaining your blood pressure levels.

Also be aware that certain medications can cause low blood pressure. These medications include diuretics (such as Lasix or water pills), alpha blockers, beta blockers (such as atenolol), drugs for Parkinson's disease, and certain antidepressants.

Whether your blood pressure is high, low, or normal, it is a good idea to monitor it regularly. This can include through regular doctor appointments, self monitoring at home, or using the blood pressure cuffs that are often seen in pharmacies. Being aware of changes in your blood pressure is an important contributor to your overall cardiovascular health.



T-MOBILE

T-Mobile and the Herkimer County Office for the Aging have partnered to offer FREE technology classes to older adults. These classes will provide general information and overview of cellular telephone and tablet usage. Individual support will also be available during class.

**LOCATION: T-Mobile Store
220 East State Street, Herkimer
Tuesday, February 17, 2025
TIME: 8:30—10:00**

**Limited spots available: Sign up now!
Call Kelly at the Office for the Aging
315-867-1371**

You do not have to be a T-Mobile customer

HEAP

**Emergency HEAP opens up on
January 2, 2025**

If you are income eligible—
Emergency Temporary Assistance
may be available for payment of past due
bills if your utilities are shut off or if you
have a disconnect notice.

Please call the HEAP Office



**109 Mary Street, Suite 1101
Herkimer, NY 13350**

**Phone: 315-867-1195
Fax: 315-867-1448**

E-mail: hcofa@herkimercountyny.gov

Mediterranean Chicken

- 2 tbs white wine
- 2 tsp olive oil
- 6 skinless, boneless chicken breast halves
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/2 cup diced onion
- 3 cups tomatoes, chopped
- 1/2 cup white wine
- 2 tsp chopped fresh thyme
- 1 tbs chopped fresh basil
- 1/2 cup Kalamata olives
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh parsley
- salt and pepper to taste

Heat white wine and oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add chicken and cook until golden, about 4-6 minutes on each side. remove chicken from skillet and set aside.

add garlic to pan drippings; saute for 30 seconds. add onion; cook and stir until onions are tender, about 3 minutes. Add tomatoes and bring to a boil. reduce heat to low and add 1/2 cup white wine; simmer for 10 minutes. Add thyme and basil and simmer for 5 more minutes.

return chicken to skillet, cover, and cook over low heat until the chicken is cooked through and no longer pink inside. Add olives and parsley; cook for 1 minute. Season with salt and pepper to serve.