

# Controlling Your High Blood Pressure

## Transcript

*"The doctor comes in and says you got high blood pressure. And obviously said diet, exercise, quit smoking, quit drinking, basically quit doing everything I enjoyed. And I didn't quit it all, but I slowed down a great bit."*

While high blood pressure, or hypertension, can't be cured, you can limit its damage by controlling it. To control blood pressure, you'll need to make changes in your lifestyle, and in some cases, take medication.

People with pre-hypertension should make lifestyle changes too, because even before you develop hypertension, heart disease risk increases. Lifestyle changes are mostly changes in habits that only you can control. Only you can quit smoking, lose weight, make changes in what you eat, reduce alcohol consumption, and get more physically active.

One of the most challenging changes you can make is to stop smoking. Smoking causes many deadly diseases, and if you have high blood pressure, the situation is even worse. Because when you light up, your blood pressure also goes up, and so does your risk of severe heart disease. That's why it's more important than ever that you give it up now.

*"I've smoked since I was about eighteen or nineteen years old, and I've cut back quite a bit, but cutting back is not enough. I'm going to have to quit."*

It won't be easy, but you can do it. Just keep trying until you succeed. If you have difficulty quitting on your own, talk to your doctor or health care team and ask what help is available.

If you're overweight, start taking steps to lose those extra pounds, because losing as little as ten extra pounds may bring blood pressure down. Remember, extra pounds didn't go on overnight. To lose weight and keep it off, you need a new attitude toward sensible eating and physical activity.

Developing this new attitude takes time as well as planning. A dietitian can help you make permanent changes in how you choose, prepare and eat your food.

Physical activity should be a part of your lifestyle changes. One study after another emphasizes the benefits of physical activity for good health. For people with high blood pressure, it's an even greater help. Regular physical activity may help lower blood pressure. It's also a great way to lose weight. Just be sure to check with your doctor before beginning any strenuous physical activity program.

The best type of activity is called aerobic activity. Aerobic activities include brisk walking, swimming, cycling and dancing. Gradually increase your activity to 30 to 45 minutes of aerobic activity on most days.

Even if you're stuck in the house, there are lots of ways to stay active. Remember, you'll benefit by being active every day, so make physical activity a part of your daily routine.

Keep your alcohol intake low. For women, and lighter-weight people, that's a half-ounce of alcohol per day. Which is one twelve-ounce beer, one five-ounce glass of wine, or a one-ounce shot of 100 proof liquor.

Men should limit the amount of alcohol they drink to one ounce per day, which is two beers, two glasses of wine, or two shots of one-hundred proof liquor. Any more than that can cause your blood pressure to go up.

Check with your doctor to make sure there aren't any other reasons for you to avoid alcohol altogether.

For many people, these changes in lifestyle may be enough to keep blood pressure under control. For others, medication may also be needed.

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