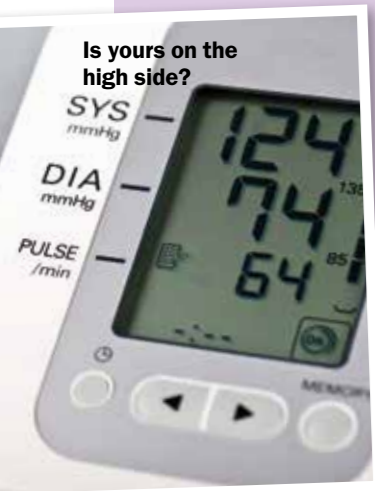


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Easy Ways To LOWER Your Blood Pressure

High blood pressure is the third biggest cause of early death in the UK. So how can you avoid it?



Is yours on the high side?

Know Your Numbers

The only way to know if you have high blood pressure is to get it checked. Healthy blood pressure should be 120/80mmHg or less. If yours is between 121/81mmHg and 139/89mmHg you should try to lower it by losing weight, eating less salt and eating more veg. Over 140/90mmHg, you may need a combination of lifestyle changes and medication.

WORDS: KAREN EVENNETT PICTURES: ISTOCKPHOTO, ALAMY

Enjoy A Drink – But Not Too Many

Having high blood pressure, or wanting to prevent it, are good reasons to count how many alcoholic drinks you have. Sticking below the recommended upper limit of 14 units a week can lower systolic pressure by 3.3mm and diastolic by 2mm, according to an analysis of 15 different studies. If you're a wine-o'clock gal, that's one 175ml glass six days a week.



Avoid The Silent Killer

You can't see it, and you can't feel it, but high blood pressure causes 60% of strokes and kills thousands of people every year in the UK. Yet it is almost entirely preventable, according to Blood Pressure UK. The main risk factors – being overweight, taking too little exercise, eating too much salt, and slipping back on our five-a-day fruit and veg – are things we can all change.

Meditate On This

Getting stressed could cause your blood pressure to spike temporarily – but do frequent bursts of stress add up and cause long term high blood pressure? Researchers aren't sure – but studies have found that Transcendental Meditation lowers systolic (top number) blood pressure by more than 10 points and diastolic (bottom number) by six points, double the reduction from other relaxation techniques. Find out more at www.uk.tn.org.



Doubly effective

Pinch Of Salt

Thousands of studies have shown that cutting down on salt is the best way to lower blood pressure without drugs, or alongside them. "We each consume an average of 8g salt a day in the UK – most of it unintentionally in processed foods (one slice of bread contains 0.5g)," says Shefalee Loth. "Cutting down to below 3g a day can lower your systolic pressure by 10-12mm."



Get on the scales!

Even if you have a healthy BMI (between 19 and 25) losing weight could benefit your blood pressure if you're heavier than you were in your late teens. "For every kilo that you lose, you could cut your blood pressure by 1mm," says Shefalee Loth.



Soup – an easy way to get a couple of your five-a-day

Love Liquorice?

It may surprise you to learn that liquorice (often found in herbal teas) can cause your blood pressure to soar. "That's because it contains a super-sweet compound called glycyrrhizin, which mimics the hormone aldosterone. At high levels that leads to high blood pressure," explains nutritionist Shefalee Loth of Blood Pressure UK.

White Coat Syndrome

Do you really have high blood pressure, or is it just white coat syndrome – triggered by anxiety in a medical setting? You can find out by wearing a 24-hour monitor (from your GP) before drugs are prescribed. A home blood pressure monitor is also useful – but have it checked against your GP's monitor to make sure its readings are accurate.

Have A Shot Of Beetroot

Drinking 250ml beetroot juice every day can cut systolic BP by 10mm. The effect, most marked 3-6 hours later, lasts up to 24 hours. The nitrate it contains widens blood vessels helping blood flow. The downside? Beetroot juice can have a dramatic effect on bowels.



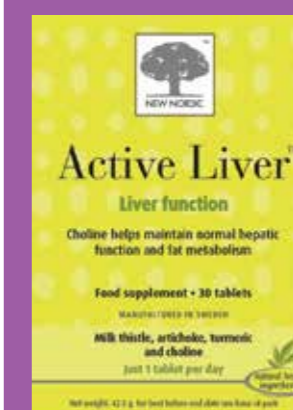
Powerful stuff



Herbal Help

You could help to bring borderline high blood pressure under control using a herbal remedy as a natural alternative to drugs. "In one study Hawthorn reduced blood pressure from 160/89 to 150/85 in two months," says nutritionist Ali Cullen. "It works gradually, with a cumulative effect, and that's what makes it so safe to take." Try A. Vogel Hawthorn drops (£9.75 for 50ml).

Love Your Liver



Active Liver™ has milk thistle and artichoke to support liver function. Choline helps liver function and fat metabolism. Active Liver™ is available in Holland & Barrett and leading independent health stores, or from www.newnordic.co.uk. For an information leaflet, call New Nordic™ on 0800 389 1255.