Lower Your Blood Pressure in 30 Days

A 5-Step Plan Without Relying On Medication

High blood pressure is easy to get, and hard to get rid of.

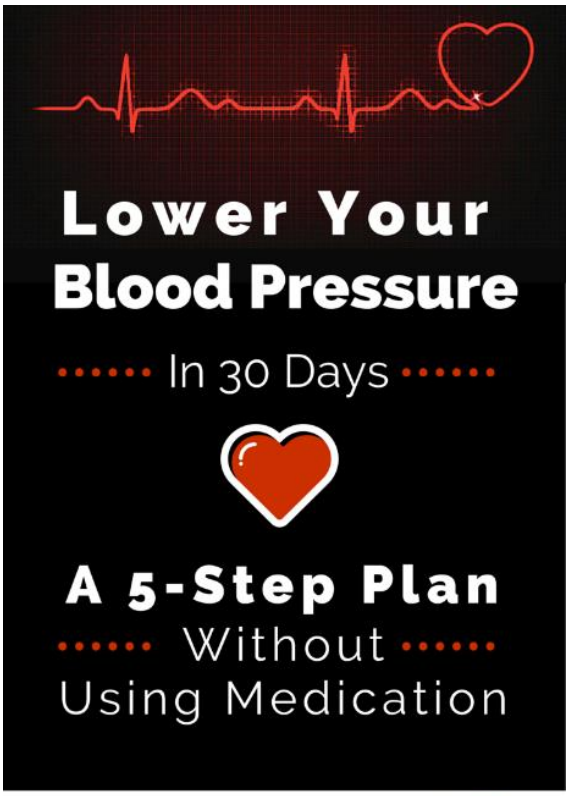
That's why it affects **1 in 3** American adults (1).

When blood pressure is high, the heart must work harder to push blood around the body. This increases strain not only on the heart, but the arteries and many other organs too.

Remember that your heart beats 100,000 times per day on average.

That's why correcting blood pressure is one of, if not **the most important** thing you can do to increase your health, quality of life and lifespan.

Fortunately, evidence shows there are many ways to help naturally treat high blood pressure ourselves. Nobody wants to rely on medication for the rest of their life.



Beyond Basics

Now we all know the importance of eating a healthy diet, regardless of our personal health situation. A diet that contains plenty of vegetables, limits junk food and alcohol, and no smoking of course. I guess you could call them the basics.

Assuming you already do the basics, the following 5 steps have been **clinically shown to greatly reduce blood pressure and improve cardiovascular health**. Best of all these steps can be implemented immediately, and in some instances can be just as effective as prescription medicine.

I am challenging you to implement these changes into your life over the next 30 days. Your heart and brain will thank you for it.

*(**Important:** Always speak to your healthcare provider before ceasing any prescribed medications or starting any new dietary supplements.)*

1. Cut Down Your Intake of Salt (Sodium)

Sodium is a critical electrolyte in the body, the majority of which we get in the form of salt.

Problem is the more sodium in your bloodstream, the more water it binds. This increases how hard the heart must work to push blood around the body… and an increase in blood pressure.

To be honest, the importance of cutting out salt is far less for those with normal blood pressure. However, in those with high blood pressure, salt restriction is **hugely influential**.

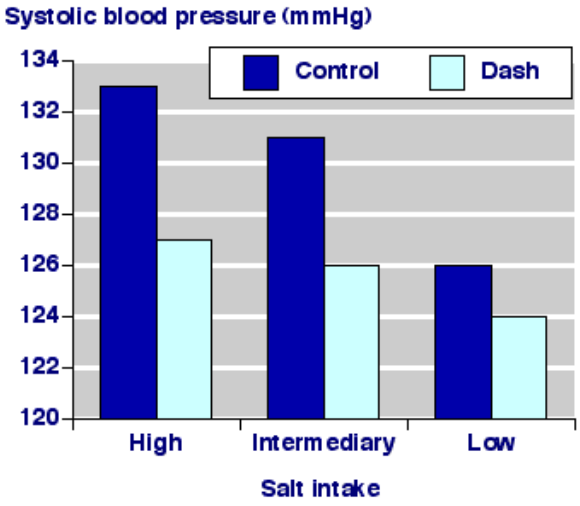
A review study published in the prestigious British Medical Journal looked at 990 patients with diagnosed high blood pressure. They found that on average - of almost 1000 people - simply halving their regular salt intake reduced systolic blood pressure (which is the top and most important reading) by almost 11 points (2).

To put that into perspective, a reduction of just 5 points is thought to reduce your risk of a life-ending stroke by 14% and other cardiovascular diseases by 9% (3).

This was an 11 point reduction on average, and ranged from 3.5 up to 18 points. That can easily be the difference between taking high dose medication for life, and getting off them for good.

In fact, a reduction like that can be the difference between life and death.

Many other studies in those with high blood pressure find the same trend, and it typically looks like this. (Control = those who make no changes to diet except reducing salt; Dash = those who have cut down on salt and actively eat more fruit and vegetables)



You can see the huge influence that salt reduction has on systolic blood pressure, with the left column showing high salt intake, and the right column low intake.

How Should I Reduce My Salt (Sodium) Intake?

Now it's not the salt you add when cooking or on your vegetables that you need to worry about. It's the salt in packaged and processed foods that makes up the vast majority our intake.

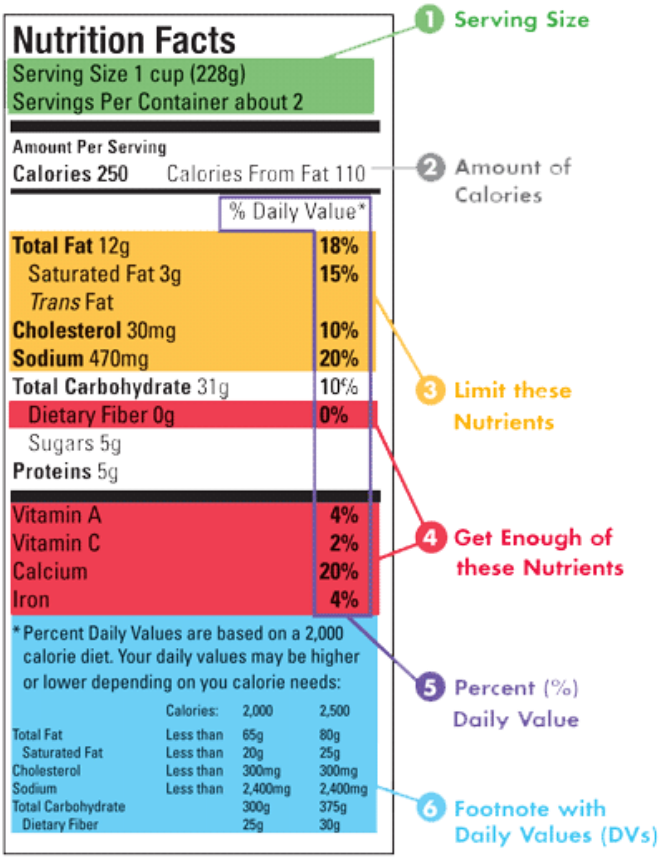
Packaged and processed foods are so high in sodium because large amounts of salt helps to preserve the product, keeping it edible and on the shelf longer.

Use the nutrition label on food packages to determine how much sodium is in your favourite foods. The %DV (Daily Value) tells you how much that food contributes to your total daily diet.

- **5% DV (120 mg) or less of sodium per serving is low**
- **20% DV (480 mg) or more of sodium per serving is high**

Get more information on how to read nutrition labels here, but please don't watch the accompanying FDA video- it's painful!

NOTE: THE SALT MOLECULE IS MADE UP OF ONE ATOM OF SODIUM AND ONE ATOM OF CHLORIDE. 40% OF THE WEIGHT IS SODIUM, SO 1,500 MG OF SODIUM EQUALS 3,750 MG OF SALT. THAT IS ABOUT ¾ OF A TEASPOON.



Major organisations recommend we have no more than 2300 mg of sodium per day (1 teaspoon of salt), and ideally less than 1500 mg if possible (about ¾ teaspoon of salt). The reality is that the average daily sodium intake is roughly 3400 mg, most of which comes from packaged foods.

So focus on cooking more and choosing unprocessed foods over processed. That way you can feel free to add salt yourself if your dish needs the flavour.

Summary: Reducing your salt intake is one of the most impactful ways to lower your blood pressure. Strictly limit the amount of processed and packaged foods you choose, as these are by far the greatest source of salt in the modern diet.

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2. Eat More Potatoes and Sweet Potatoes

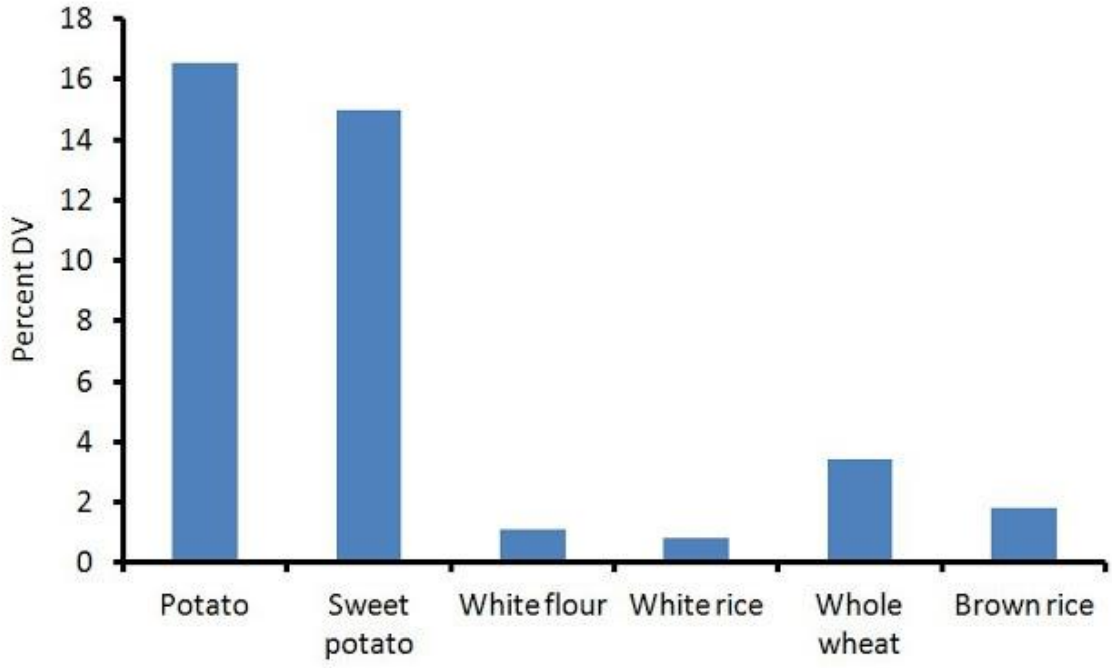
In the context of blood pressure and heart health, potassium works in tandem with sodium (salt) to regulate the electrical activity of the heart.

Human trials show that an increased potassium intake significantly reduces high blood pressure (except for those with chronic kidney disease), especially individuals deficient in potassium. In fact, a combination of potassium and magnesium can lower blood pressure as much as medications (4, 5, 6).

Unfortunately we no longer eat much potassium. The average American now eats roughly 400% less than our hunter-gatherer ancestors, which is unsurprising considering that the greatest food source of potassium in our diet is fruit and vegetables (7).

It goes without saying we can all benefit from eating more vegetables, but I like to place emphasis on eating more root vegetables (such as potatoes and sweet potatoes). They tend to replace other starchy carbs on the plate that have far less potassium and far more sodium.

For example, replacing grains in the diet with root vegetables dramatically increases potassium intake, as illustrated by Dr. Stephan Guyenet. The graph shows how much of our recommended daily potassium intake (%) is met with a 100-calorie portion of each food.



You can see that grains and rice – even whole grains – cannot compete with the potassium in root vegetables, or other vegetables for that matter. Consider swapping more pasta, rice and sandwich dishes for potato-based meals.

Summary: *Increasing your potassium intake is a fundamental aspect of treating high blood pressure (unless you have chronic kidney disease, in which case you need to speak with your doctor or dietitian). Root vegetables like potatoes are one of the best food sources, and can easily be substituted for other starchy carbs at meal times.*

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3. Include Fermented Foods In Your Diet Every Day

Vitamin K2 (also known as menaquinone) has a close relationship with vascular health.

It works to keep calcium in your bones while removing it from blood vessels where it can cause arterial stiffness and calcification (8).

While no studies have measured the direct effect of vitamin K2 on blood pressure yet, a study of 244 post-menopausal women found that vitamin K2 supplementation for three years significantly reduced stiffening of the artery walls. This makes sense given its relationship with vascular health (9, 10, 11).

Animal foods (like meat, full-fat dairy, egg yolks) and fermented foods (like sauerkraut, natto and miso) are by far the best food sources of vitamin K2.

I prefer to recommend fermented foods as they also supply your gut with healthy bacteria known as probiotics. New research suggests our gut bacteria has a direct influence on blood pressure via kidney regulation.

If you are particularly vulnerable to arterial calcification – such as diabetics or those with a family history of high cholesterol and blood pressure – then it is recommended you include more fermented foods in your diet, or consider a vitamin K2 (MK-7) supplement.

Summary: *Vitamin K2 appears to inhibit the progression of arterial stiffness, which protects cardiovascular health. Animal foods and fermented foods are the best source of vitamin K2.*

4. Start Drinking Hibiscus (Roselle) Tea

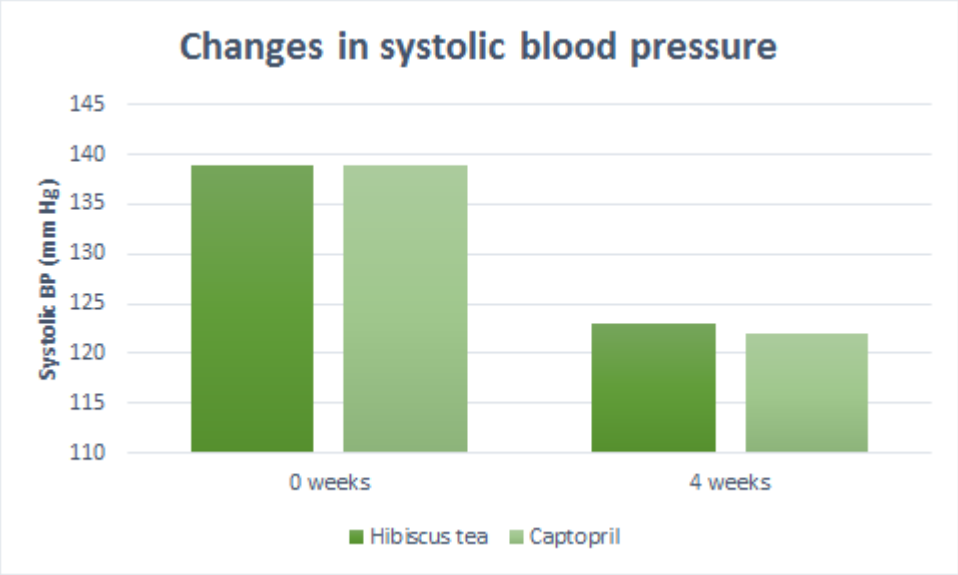
Hibiscus (Roselle) tea, also known as sour tea, is surrounded by many questionable health claims.

But there is solid clinical evidence that it lowers blood pressure in those with existing high blood pressure.

There was a study done on 75 subjects with diagnosed hypertension who were not taking any other supplements or blood pressure lowering medications at the time.

Researchers found that one large hibiscus tea before breakfast each day for 4 weeks was associated with an 11% reduction in systolic blood pressure (139.05 to 123.73 mmHg) and 12.5% reduction in diastolic blood pressure (90.81 to 79.52 mmHg) (12).

Those effects were equal to the active control group who were taking 50 mg of captopril daily for the same time frame.



Numerous other studies have replicated these results, with beneficial effects seen in as little as two weeks (13, 14, 15).

How Much Should I Have?

Hibiscus tea should be your go to drink, and is the best alternative for coffee if you have high blood pressure.

As tea, about one gram of dried calyx (the part of the flower directly beneath the petals) should be brewed. It should be enjoyed either once in the morning or twice per day but with at least 8 hours between doses.

Alternatively, hibiscus supplements are also effective, and should be dosed according to their anthocyanin content.

A daily 10mg dose of hibiscus anthocyanins – equivalent to 1g of a 1% extract or 500mg of a 2% extract – is optimal. Higher doses may be toxic.

Of course, you should always contact your personal doctor before starting any dietary supplements.

Summary: Hibiscus (Roselle) tea has been repeatedly shown to lower blood pressure in those with existing high blood pressure by around 10% systolic and 12% diastolic. The effect may be noticeable after just two weeks.

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5. Make Moderate-Intensity Exercise Your Friend

Physical activity is a very powerful and established way to reduce blood pressure, among many other health markers.

A large 2015 review of the evidence concluded that moderate-intensity aerobic exercise (like brisk walking, swimming or cycling) helps to prevent or manage high blood pressure (16).

It does this through a range of improvements to length and diameter of arteries, reducing inflammation, improving strength of the heart walls and more.

There is good evidence that resistance (weight) training helps too if done properly, but it is recommended to follow a prescribed exercise regime to be safe.

A good way to start is by obtaining a pedometer and aiming for 10,000 steps per day at least 4 days per week. Alternatively you can download a pedometer app on your phone such as Noom or Stepz, and just keep the phone in your pocket.

Summary: Exercise is one of the best-known and most effective ways to reduce high blood pressure. It only needs to be of moderate intensity, and resistance (weight) training can help too.

The Next Step

So there you have it.

Those are 5 crucial steps to take if you want to successfully manage your blood pressure… without relying on medications for the rest of your life.

You've come this far, so at least give them all a try for the next 30 days and test your blood pressure readings then. You will feel great, and the health benefits will extend far beyond heart health.

To recap the 5 steps:

1. **Limit salt (sodium) intake**
2. **Eat potatoes more often, especially in place of grains**
3. **Try to include fermented foods in your diet everyday**
4. **Start drinking Hibiscus tea**
5. **Reach at least 10,000 steps per day for 4 days in the week**

If you found this useful, feel free to share it with friends or family that have the same issue.

And if you have any feedback or comments then you can email me directly at hello@dietvsdisease.org, I will respond.

Be sure to join our private Facebook group or follow me on Pinterest if you use any of those mediums.

Here's to honest and hype-free health advice,

Joe Leech, MSc Nutrition.

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