

Southern University Land- Grant Campus Nutrition Fact Sheet



Hypertension

What is hypertension?

Hypertension or high blood pressure is usually called the silent killer because there are often no symptoms. But, recently research has shown symptoms like: headache, dizziness, sleep disturbance, fatigue, weakness and shortness of breath during any type of exertion are common with hypertension.

What are the risk factors?

The risk increases if one or both parents have high blood pressure, if you are African American and if you are overweight or obese.

What are some dangers?

Damages body tissues and vital organs

One of the leading causes of:

- Heart Attack
- Congestive Heart Failure
- Stroke
- Kidney Failure
- Premature Death
- Damage to the Retina of the Eye and Blindness

High blood pressure makes your heart work harder than it should to pump blood. This harder working heart is enlarged and the arteries become hardened making it hard for your overworked heart and stiff arteries to pump blood properly which can lead to congestive heart failure (backup of fluid into the lungs).

What is a normal blood pressure?

Optimal (desirable): 120/80 or less

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Normal: Less than 130/85

High-Normal: 130-139/ 85-89

High: 140/90 and higher

The higher number is called the systolic pressure. This pressure is the highest pressure in your arteries when your heart contracts and exerts a strong force on the walls during a heartbeat. The lower number is called the diastolic pressure. This pressure is the lowest pressure in your blood vessels when your heart relaxes between beats and fills with blood.

What can be done to control hypertension?

Lose Weight- Just losing 10 pounds can lead to a drop in your blood pressure.

Exercise- Taking a brisk walk or riding a bike several days a week can lower your blood pressure too.

Limit Alcohol- Alcohol raises your blood pressure even if you don't have hypertension and reduces your heart's pumping ability. Men should consume less than 24 ounces of beer, 10 ounces of wine or 3 ounces of hard liquor a day. Women and lighter weight people should consume only half these amounts.

Eat a Healthy Diet- Follow the Food Guide Pyramid recommendation for healthy eating. Research found that some people lowered their blood pressure through diet alone. Forty percent of these people were able to stop their medication. An eating plan called Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH), which is rich in low-fat foods, fruits and vegetables, may help reduce the risk of high blood pressure.

Hold the Salt- Choose foods low in salt and sodium. Most people should consume no more than 2400 milligrams of sodium a day (about 1 teaspoon of table salt).

Medication- These lifestyle changes will help, but they may not be enough for you. You may need to take medication to keep your blood pressure under control. Check with your doctor to see what is best for you and your unique situation.