5 Easy Ways to Lower Your Blood Pressure

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Health experts now know high blood pressure is the biggest single risk factor for stroke. Blood is carried around the body by the arteries. If blood pressure is too high, it puts a strain on your blood vessels, including the ones leading to your

brain, which could lead to stroke. However, there are some simple changes we can make to lower blood pressure and reduce our risk of stroke (1).

1. **Take medication**

There are many different types of medication that can be used to lower high blood pressure. You may have to take this for the rest of your life, or you might come off it if your blood pressure lowers as a result of a change in diet and/or lifestyle. Some of the most common prescribed drugs are called angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) Inhibitors. These work by increasing the amount of blood your heart pumps and raising blood flow, which helps to lower your heart's workload and bring your blood pressure down (1) (2).

2. **Change your lifestyle**

Several different lifestyle factors contribute to high blood pressure and increase your risk of stroke. Some simple changes you can make include introducing more exercise, quitting smoking and drinking less alcohol. Binge drinking or regularly consuming more than the recommended amount per week is also known to contribute to high blood pressure, so try not to drink to excess (1).

3. **Improve your diet**

People who eat a lot of salt, and not enough potassium (found in bananas and other foods), are more likely to have high blood pressure. Try not to add extra salt to your food – and avoid convenience foods that already have a lot of salt added. It's important to maintain a healthy weight as obesity also increases your risk of stroke, so stick to a good diet which includes five portions of fruit and vegetables a day (3).

4. **Get regular checks**

It's important to be aware of what your blood pressure should be, based on your

age and sex. A normal blood pressure level is 120/80 mmHg or less. Make sure you regularly have it checked to detect and treat high blood pressure. Starting at age 18, everyone should have their blood pressure measured regularly, at least once every five years, and every year for those with an increased risk of high blood pressure. Both arms should be tested to see if there is a difference (4).

5. **Look after yourself**

People who suffer from chronic conditions (problems that need to be managed over a long period of time) can have a greater risk of developing high blood pressure. These conditions include as kidney disease, diabetes, and sleep apnoea. Keeping on top of other health issues and your general health by reducing stress and getting at least six hours of sleep a night can also help to reduce your risk of high blood pressure and stroke (1).

References

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