

## HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE (HYPERTENSION)?

Blood pressure is a measurement of the force of your blood against the blood vessel walls. The recommended target for people with diabetes is less than 130/80 mmHg. The top number is the pressure when your heart contracts and pushes blood out (systolic). The bottom number is the pressure when the heart relaxes between beats (diastolic). There are often no symptoms of high blood pressure. This means that you may have high blood pressure and not know it.

### STRATEGIES TO LOWER BLOOD PRESSURE

#### Healthy eating

Healthy eating plays an important role in managing blood pressure. It is important to limit the sodium (salt) in foods.

#### Do the DASH

Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension, or 'DASH' has been shown to help manage and even prevent high blood pressure. The DASH diet can easily be part of a healthy diet for people with diabetes. It emphasizes whole grains, vegetables and fruits, low-fat dairy products, lean meats, and is low saturated and trans fat.

- Vegetables: at least 4 servings/day
- Fruits: at least 4 servings/day
- Grain Products: at least 5 servings/day
- Milk and Alternatives: 3 servings/day
- Meat and Alternatives: 2 servings/day

#### What happens when food is processed?

Foods naturally contain small amounts of sodium, but most of the sodium in our diet is added during food processing. Canned and packaged foods are often high in sodium because it is added to preserve food. Sodium intake should be no more than 1,500 to 2,300 mg per day. One teaspoon of salts has 2,300mg of sodium.

#### Tips:

- Choose vegetables and fruits more often (fresh or frozen without added salt).
- Choose low-fat (1% or skim) dairy products.
- Choose legumes (dried beans, peas, lentils) more often. Rinse canned beans with water.
- Choose whole grains such as whole wheat breads. Cereal, pasta and brown rice.
- Eat fish at least twice a week (fresh, frozen or canned without added salt).
- Choose lean meats and poultry without added salt.

- Limit processed smokes and cured foods.
- Look for unsalted or 'no added salt' items (e.g. crackers, nuts).
- Avoid using salt at the table and in cooking.
- Avoid seasonings that contain the word 'salt' or 'sodium', such as garlic salt, celery salt, Kosher salt, sea salt or monosodium glutamate (MSG).
- Flavour your foods with herbs, spices, fresh garlic, garlic powder, onion powder, lemon or vinegars.
- Limit frozen convenience foods and fast food restaurant meals.
- With time, your taste buds will adjust to the natural flavours without added salt.

### **Be a non-smoker**

Smoking affects blood pressure in two ways:

- Nicotine in cigarette smoke causes blood vessels to narrow, which increases blood pressure.
- Smoking makes blood pressure medications work less effectively.

Ask your doctor about local programs and medications that may help you to quit.

### **Managing stress**

To help cope with stress, try physical activity, socializing, laughter, and healthy eating, avoid unhealthy stress busters such as smoking, alcohol use, or poor food choices. Help is available if you need it. Remember to make time for yourself!

### **Alcohol**

Alcohol raises blood pressure by interfering with the blood flow to and from the heart. Drinking alcohol can lead to both high and low blood glucose and possibly high triglycerides. Talk to your doctor to see if alcohol is a choice for you.

### **Medication**

When lifestyle changes are not enough, your doctor may prescribe medication. Most people need two or more drugs to bring down their blood pressure to a healthy target. It is important to take your medication(s) as prescribed. Try to take them at the same time everyday.

Treating high blood pressure may require time, patience and care by both you and your doctor. Your doctor might have to try different medications or combinations of medications to see which ones work the best for you with the fewest side effects. It is important to continue taking medication(s), even when your blood pressure is at target.

Talk to your doctor or pharmacist if you have any questions about your medications.