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High Blood Pressure – Hypertension

Behavioral approach that offers insight and control of stress related high blood pressure. May help reduce the needs for medication and the side effects that can accompany medicines.

Written by L. John Mason, Ph.D., Author of the Bestseller; Guide To Stress Reduction.

Hypertension is not just a disease of aging. Young men and women can suffer from its damaging, sometimes killing, effects. Please do not take this condition lightly. Get it treated as soon as possible before it creates lasting damage and adversely affects your life as you do age.

High blood pressure can be a very dangerous, and often untreated, symptom of stress. In fact, perhaps 70% of all high blood pressure problems are related to emotional responses to difficult or dangerous situations. When this response becomes habituated by your body, the prolonged high blood pressure can lead to long term permanent physical damage such as hardening of the arteries (atherosclerosis), heart, strokes, liver, or kidney damage. These can be very serious and very scary, but many people do not know they have high blood pressure or do not treat this potential killer disease.

Medications and physician care is the most immediate and important way to begin to control this problem before it can cause permanent, irreversible damage! The expense of medication and its side effects can make this difficult, however, there are other things you can do to minimize the dangers of hypertension and learn to control your body's response to stress so it will not make you ill or debilitate you! Especially, if you are in the 70% of high blood pressure sufferers who have not yet been damaged irreversibly.

The keys to controlling high blood pressure are:

- Breathe slowly/diaphragmatically
- Regular deep relaxation with Biofeedback Temperature monitoring
- Use the special relaxation tape regularly!
- Learn to warm your hands and feet
- Avoid caffeine and stimulants
- Regular aerobic exercise
- Remain in the present... in your body, in a positive way
- Taper your high blood pressure medications after you have mastered the relaxation-biofeedback, under your physician's care.



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Learn to breathe diaphragmatically

Place a hand over your upper abdomen
Push it OUT as you inhale
Let it move IN as you exhale
Let your chest, shoulder, neck, and back relax as you breathe
Only on a very deep breath should these parts move in the breath. This may be the most important Hypertension Technique you can learn!

If you link taking one deep breath to a reoccurring work event like a telephone ringing or checking the time, you could remember to take these slow deep breaths throughout your work schedule and keep yourself from letting the tensions build to painful or distracting levels. The secret is check in with your body in the present moment, relax your major muscles, and slow and deepen your breath. This simple exercise can have miraculous results.

Other breathing techniques involve a short series of deep slow breaths, where you count as you breathe. Try counting slowly 1-4 as you inhale, pause and hold your breath as you count 1-4, and then release slowly, but completely, as you count 1-8. After four of these breaths, you will be breathing better and more in control of your body's pattern of holding tension. This can help teach you how to control your hypertension.

Stress Management Tapes

Use the [Stress Management for High Blood Pressure](#) audio program 1-3 times per day for 8-12 weeks. Use a temperature trainer on your hands to learn how to warm your hands with relaxation. When you can consistently get above 90 degrees Fahrenheit (93-95 degrees is ideal) then you can begin to master warming your feet to 90 degrees.

When you can "let go" by relaxing and warming your hands and feet, you will be able to control if not prevent your panic episodes. Then you must develop the confidence in your control so the high blood pressure will not control your life.

Eat Regular Meals

Low fat and complex carbohydrates are better than fast foods with lots of sugar. AVOID CAFFEINE and other stimulants. Caffeine is found in coffee, black teas, cola drinks, chocolate, some over-the-counter pain medications, and other foods/drugs. Read labels. Eating as closely as you can to natural foods (lots of: fruits, vegetables, whole grains, etc.) will benefit any one.



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Regular Exercise

Regular exercise will help you to work off the effects of life's stresses. 3-5 times per week of regular exercise that can elevate your heart rate for 15-45 minutes would be best. Check with your doctor before beginning an exercise program if you have been inactive for a long while. Even though elevating your heart rate can be a little scary, the release of tensions and the strengthening of your cardiovascular system will have great benefits. This can improve circulation and so can help to reduce your blood pressure.

Positive Thoughts

Many people with high blood pressure have trouble maintaining their thoughts in present time or focusing on their bodies in positive ways. Fears or angers from the past or apprehensions about the future seem to take up too much of their conscientiousness. Living in the present, letting go of negative emotions, and letting life's daily dramas roll off you are all important skills to develop.

Taper Medication

Taper your high blood pressure medications after you have mastered the relaxation - biofeedback, under your physician's care. After you have learned to "let go" through relaxation and biofeedback training, you can monitor your blood pressure at home. When you have developed the skills of hand and foot warming, you will find that your blood pressure can begin to drop down in more normal ranges. Write these regular home blood pressure readings down to show your doctor. In the doctor's office your blood pressure may still be higher than you like! Many people have "white coat syndrome" where their blood pressure will be 10-15 points higher in the doctor's office than it normally is at home. With your doctor's agreement and assistance you may be able to begin reducing your high blood pressure medications. Any changes to your normal medication may elevate your blood pressure, so reduce these medications slowly, in gradual steps.

Insomnia or problems with sleeping may affect your high blood pressure. If this is an issue for you, you may want to read the section on sleeping disorders and use the special tape at bedtime to help you get to sleep and so rest better.