

Real Common Sense

November 2022

High Blood Pressure (Hypertension)

Hello, this is Dr. Ellen. In this month's 'Real Common Sense' newsletter, I want to write about an all-too-prevalent problem, high blood pressure or hypertension (HTN). During my years of practice, I have seen so many patients diagnosed with HTN, several of whom suffered from heart, kidney, and other damage resulting from their persistent HTN. Almost all had been tried on one or more medications attempting to decrease their blood pressure. Some had their HTN adequately controlled with continuing medication use, but many did not achieve a sufficiently and sustainably decreased pressure.

Using the Ellen Cutler Method (ECM), I have often been able to help patients find their way back toward wellness and improved blood pressure. By implementing the appropriate measures for each individual, many have been able to lower and then stabilize their blood pressure, often with continued and better tolerated use of medication. I have even seen some whose tissue damage from HTN improved.

By the way, if you didn't get a chance to see my previous newsletters, you can find them on my new website, www.drellencutler.com under 'Media'.

What is High Blood Pressure (Hypertension)?

The pressure of blood pushing against the walls of your arteries is referred to as your 'blood pressure'. Arteries are the blood vessels that carry oxygenated blood from your heart to other parts of your body (the veins returning deoxygenated blood to the heart). Blood pressure measurement is reported as two numbers. The first number listed is the systolic blood pressure (SBP), which is the pressure in your major artery being measured when your heart beats. The second number listed is the diastolic blood pressure (DBP), which is the pressure being measured in your arteries when your heart rests between beats.⁽¹⁾

The most recent guidelines used to categorize blood pressure were established in 2017.⁽²⁾

- "Normal" blood pressure is considered to be less than 120 mm Hg SBP and less than 80 mm Hg DBP (<120/<80).
- "Elevated" blood pressure is 120-129 mm Hg SBP and less than 80 mm Hg DBP (120-129/<80).

High blood pressure or Hypertension (HTN) is diagnosed if blood pressure is consistently 130/80 mm Hg or higher in either number. HTN is divided into two "stages":

- Stage 1 is diagnosed with a SBP of 130-139 or a DBP of 80-89
- Stage 2 is diagnosed with a SBP ≥ 140 mm Hg or a DBP ≥ 90 mm Hg.

Of note, blood pressure readings should be based on at least 2 careful readings obtained on at least 2 different occasions.

What Causes and Can Result from Hypertension?

HTN usually develops gradually over many years. It is commonly referred to as primary or essential hypertension. It cannot be identified as a secondary effect of an underlying disease process. Specific genetic predispositions to primary HTN have not been identified. However, the risk of acquiring primary HTN seems to increase by unhealthy lifestyle choices including being overweight or obese, higher sodium and lower potassium intake, alcohol overuse, and insufficient regular physical activity.^(1,2,3)

Secondary HTN is caused by an underlying condition or certain medications. It is much less common than primary HTN but tends to appear suddenly and cause higher blood pressure. Secondary HTN can arise because of adrenal gland tumors, kidney or thyroid pathologies, or obstructive sleep apnea. Some of the medications that may cause it include certain decongestants, corticosteroids, oral contraceptives, and amphetamines.^(1,2,3)

HTN can damage your health in many ways. Most people with high blood pressure have no symptoms, even if readings are dangerously high. You can have high blood pressure for years without any symptoms. A few people with high blood pressure may have non-specific symptoms such as headaches, shortness of breath, and nosebleeds. Over time, chronic poorly controlled HTN can seriously damage important organs including the heart, brain, kidneys, and eyes. Fortunately, in many cases, well-managed blood pressure can lower your risk for serious health problems.^(1,2,3)

Treatments for Hypertension

Conventional thinking usually conceives of medical treatment for HTN, particularly essential HTN, as primarily based on the use of one or more medications from a number of different categories. Examples are water pills (diuretics), angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors and angiotensin II receptor blockers (ARBs), and calcium channel blockers, though medications from many other categories may also be prescribed. However, lifestyle and other changes are also recommended. These include getting regular exercise, achieving and maintaining a healthy weight, eating a healthy diet (which includes lower sodium, limited saturated fats, and higher potassium), limiting alcohol to less than one drink a day for women or two drinks a day for men, quitting smoking, getting 7 to 9 hours of sleep nightly, decreasing long-term emotional stress, and getting support from family, friends, or a support group.^(3,4)

Regular exercise has many other health benefits and can be of great benefit to those with HTN. I personally do daily aerobic exercise using my Peloton stationary cycle, sometimes combining this with strengthening exercise. But other less commonly considered exercising can also be of benefit. For example, Tai Chi Chuan has been found to significantly decrease both SBP and DBP as much as aerobic exercise and helps to decrease anxiety.^(5,6) A little known but potentially helpful routine exercise is inspiratory muscle strength training (IMST), which uses a simple resistance breathing device that looks like an inhaler. One multi-trial review found there were clinically significant reductions in both SBP and DBP in adult men and women.⁽⁷⁾

A number of diets have been recommended to help lower blood pressure, including the Mediterranean and DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) diets. The latter diet is specifically aimed at lowering blood pressure. The DASH diet encourages eating lots of fruits, vegetables, and lean proteins, while limiting red meat, sodium, added sugars, and added fats.⁽⁸⁾ In my clinical experience, I have most often found that the most effective diet to help lower blood pressure over time is a whole food, plant-based diet. Plant-based diets with limited animal products have been found to lower both SBP and DBP in both men and women, regardless of their BMI (body mass index).⁽⁹⁾ Also, the risk for developing hypertension has been found to be least for vegans, followed by lacto-ovo-vegetarians and then “partial vegetarians”, all when compared to omnivores.⁽¹⁰⁾

There are several means that one can use to decrease emotional stress in order to decrease HTN. A wide spectrum of regular exercise/activity regimens can help reduce stress, ranging from aerobic exercise to Tai Chi Chuan.^(5,11) In addition to Tai Chi, other mind-body interventions have been found to be helpful in decreasing blood pressure, including stress-management therapies, transcendental meditation, and breathing awareness meditation.⁽¹²⁾ Of note, many of my patients have also found that when their activities were done with a friend or in a group setting, their level of stress seemed to be more consistently decreased.

In my practice, I have found certain herbs and supplements to be of additional benefit in improving HTN. Some find that daily hibiscus tea lowers blood pressure, particularly those with elevated blood pressure or mild HTN.⁽¹³⁾ Others have experienced drops in both SBP and DBP supplementing with quercetin.⁽¹⁴⁾ Several others have been helpful as well. Olive leaf extract has been found to decrease SBP and DBP in males with elevated blood pressure of Stage 1 HTN.⁽¹⁵⁾ A meta-analysis confirmed that beetroot is helpful for managing hypertension.⁽¹⁶⁾ A review of randomized controlled trials found that L-arginine supplementation significantly lowers both systolic and diastolic blood pressure.⁽¹⁷⁾ Finally, there is also evidence from randomized controlled trials that green tea can help lower both SBP and DBP.⁽¹⁸⁾

Ellen Cutler Method (ECM)

By using ECM energetic testing, I can identify the optimal lifestyle modifications and supplementation for each person. Additionally, I can determine the obstructing sensitivities in that individual and then use ECM to energetically desensitize those issues. I have found this to

be the best, most successful way of achieving optimal improvements in wellness, including lowering blood pressure.

So, be well, be healthy, and remember...

“One way to get high blood pressure is to go mountain climbing over molehills.”

— Earl Wilson

AND

“Simply switching to a healthy, plant-based diet can lessen stroke risk by reducing cholesterol and blood pressure, flooding your body with antioxidants and improving blood flow.”

— Michael Greger

Dr. Ellen

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