

High Blood Pressure

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In North America High Blood pressure, also known as hypertension is the number one reason people visit their doctor. Blood pressure is the measurement of the force your blood places on the walls of your blood vessels as it is pushed through by your heart. Many factors can affect this pressure and many more can cause this pressure to become elevated.

Since the heart is not a constant flow mechanism, (it has a pumping phase and a relaxation phase), our blood pressure is divided into two parts. The systolic pressure relates to the pressure in the circulatory system when the heart is contracting and the diastolic pressure relates to the pressure when the heart is relaxed. Blood pressure is always written as systolic over diastolic with the average being 120/80. Both of these numbers are important and an elevation in either number can indicate a problem with the circulatory system.

Blood pressure is said to be "high" when systolic pressure rises above 140 or the diastolic pressure rises above 90. These numbers have been set somewhat arbitrarily mostly because physicians require some guidelines to go by. These numbers can be quite misleading in that a person with blood pressure of 136/88 has 5 times the risk of stroke that a person with blood pressure of 110/70. One third of the people who die of heart attacks, strokes, and congestive heart failure have blood pressures that fall in the "normal" or "high-normal" range. High blood pressure may not only be a sign of cardiovascular disease but also a cause of disease.

Traditional medicine offers a solution to this problem and this is the prescription of blood pressure medication. These medications are generally prescribed as soon as someone is diagnosed with high blood pressure and the patient is directed to take them for the rest of their life. The problem with these medications is that for the majority of patients, they are ineffective. The British Medical Journal reported upon review of the entire scientific literature: "treating mildly hypertensive patients with blood pressure medications had no effect on the overall cause of mortality." In other words, hypertensive patients in these studies died at the same rate whether they took the medication or not. These studies reaffirm an important health principle which states that treating symptoms is not the same as creating health. It would appear that with side effects including gastric problems, nausea, fatigue, headache, impotence, depression, and even congestive heart failure these medications should be reserved for patients who have been diagnosed as moderate to severely hypertensive. For these patients, the results are more advantageous. Still a better treatment would be to find the underlying cause of the high blood pressure and then to work to remove these causes.

Causes of hypertension can include atherosclerosis which is a buildup of plaques on the artery walls from bad cholesterol being deposited there. A second major factor is excessive dietary salt which increases the amount of fluid in the circulatory system. Alcohol consumption, tobacco use and obesity also play a role in high blood pressure.

When we look at the major causes of high blood pressure we see a commonality, "they are all preventable." Instead of trying to treat symptoms with medications it would be exponentially more beneficial to change our habits and change the underlying cause of hypertension. Eat more fiber and less trans-fats, decrease salt in your diet, begin eating more whole foods, stop smoking, limit your alcohol intake and most of all start exercising. These are the things that will promote overall health and reduce high blood pressure among other things. Some may say it is too late, "I'm too far gone." Not true. Studies show that any damage done to the system is reversible by making better lifestyle and dietary choices.

There are also many studies showing the effectiveness of spinal and cranial manipulation to help reduce blood pressure. There are also several fasts that have been clinically proven to drastically reduce high blood pressure. See your Chiropractor for more information on alternatives to high blood pressure and begin re-shaping your habits and lifestyle choices to reduce your blood pressure for the rest of your life, the natural way.