

PENNY SAVER NEWS

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Can it be done? Can you get your blood pressure down to healthy levels without pills? For many people high blood pressure (hypertension) is actually one common illnesses that could be managed without medication. Of course that's not saying that it is easy as pie. It's giving up the pie that can be hard for some people. But, there are several different changes in diet or lifestyle, any of which can have a significant effect on blood pressure. It just depends on how willing you are to stick to them.

How high is too high? The recommendations now are to try to keep your numbers below 140 over 90, or 140/90. The first number is how much pressure your blood vessels are feeling when your heart beats. The second number is the pressure when it's relaxed. The higher those numbers are, the more damage is being done to your blood vessels, kidneys or other organs.

What works? Can you guess what the first one is? Actually, it's not "Avoid salt", it's "Lose some weight"! That does not mean that you have to get yourself into a size 6 dress! For overweight persons, each 2 pounds lost can bring your blood pressure numbers down 1 point. So only 10 pounds down can mean 5 points off your numbers! Besides lowering blood pressure, losing just 10% of your current body weight can have a significant impact on cholesterol, triglycerides and blood sugar levels too.

The trick for many of us can be keeping the weight off. But if you stick to a

healthy diet, exercise while you're losing and come down gradually you greatly increase your chances of keeping those pounds away.

That brings us to the second no-pills way of improving your blood pressure - Exercise. If you can't manage to bring the pounds down, at least keep the exercise up. Just exercising, even without weight loss, can lower blood pressure. In many people a regular exercise program can cause a significant improvement in blood pressure. Start slow, just a 5 minute walk a couple times a day. As you're able, increase the time. If you can't walk, talk to your doctor about swimming or biking. You can get used exercise equipment without too much expense. And it will surely be less expensive than a heart attack! If that's not possible, at least lift cans of peaches every time a commercial comes on during your TV shows!

If neither of these is something you can manage, then step number 3 is to cut back on the salt. This is often the one we think about first. It is effective for many people. If you usually add a lot of salt to your foods or buy a lot of salty foods, cutting back can have a big effect. Just eating $\frac{3}{4}$ of a teaspoon less salt each day could bring your pressure down 3 to 5 points. People who use the DASH diet, specially developed to lower blood pressure, can bring their numbers down by as much as 12 points. If you want a copy of the DASH diet, give me a call. I'll be happy to send you the information.

But in our food system this can be difficult. It often means that you will need to rely a lot less on processed and pre-seasoned foods. Salt is a favorite seasoning in this country! But there are plenty of other herbs and spices for seasoning food. We are blessed with a food supply that allows us to eat fruits and vegetables year-round. There are canned veggies with no salt added on the grocery shelves now. Many frozen

vegetables can be found without salt. If you gradually adjust the amount of salt you use you will be surprised at how easy it is to get used to a lower salt diet. And your body will love how easy it is to pump your blood around too!

Here's an easy way to enjoy some local tomatoes before the season ends, and warm up the kitchen a bit on a cool evening. It's super simple, super tasty & salt free.

Baked Tomatoes

1 medium tomato for each person minced onion or garlic
Italian seasoning, or fresh basil and parley, or a salt-free seasoning blend
olive oil black pepper

Preheat oven to 400° F. Wash tomatoes and cut in half horizontally. Squeeze gently to remove seeds. Set halves, cut side up, in a baking dish coated with pan spray. Put a sprinkle of minced onion or garlic and a sprinkle of your choice of seasoning on each half. Sprinkle lightly with pepper. Drizzle or spray with olive oil. Bake for 8 to 15 minutes, depending on the size and number of tomatoes, until centers are hot and skins have split.

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