

Summer 2022

Healthy Together

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Ways to Manage Blood Pressure Without Medication

High blood pressure is common but dangerous. It raises your risk for heart disease and stroke. The good news is that there are changes you can make to keep your blood pressure under control.

Talk with a health care provider about whether controlling your blood pressure without medication is possible for you. Even if you do need to take medication, you can still benefit from the following strategies:

1 Eat a better diet. Having more vegetables, fruits and whole grains has been proven to lower blood pressure. Fish, poultry, beans, nuts and healthy oils are good choices, too. Avoid or limit the following:

- Sugary beverages
- Saturated and trans fats
- Tropical oils (like coconut and palm)
- Full-fat dairy
- Fatty meats
- Sodium (salt)

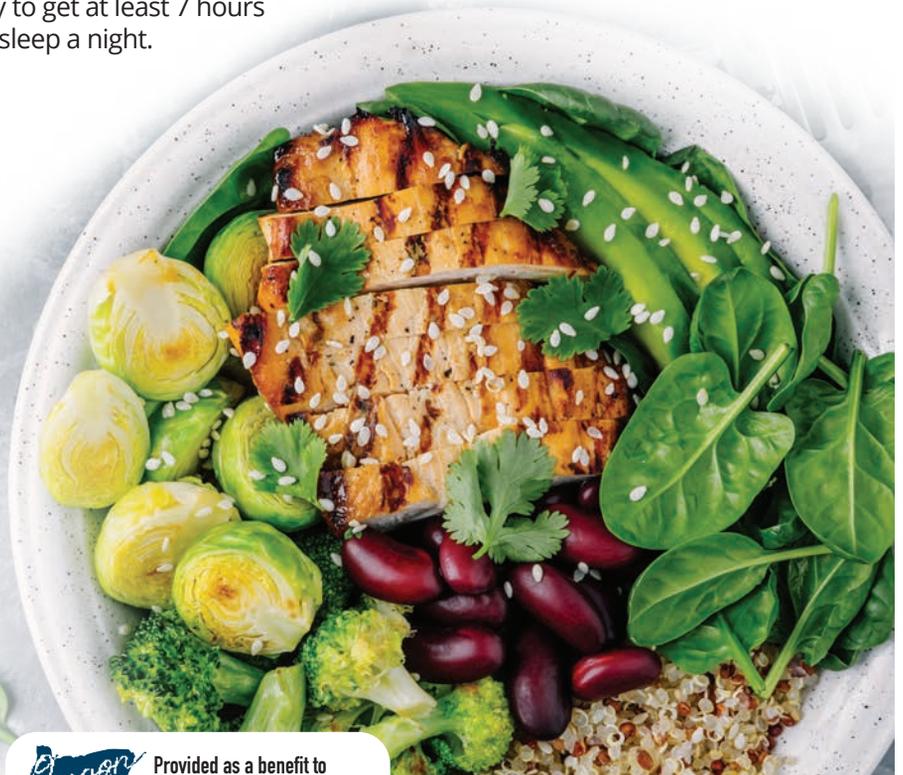
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2 Be more active. Try to do at least 150 minutes a week of moderate-intensity exercise. This means your heart rate is up and you are breaking a sweat, but you are still able to talk. Some great options include walking quickly, riding a bike and even pushing a lawn mower. It is also a good idea to do muscle-strengthening exercises at least twice a week.

3 Get enough sleep. While sleeping, your blood pressure goes down. If you do not sleep enough, it stays higher for longer. Try to get at least 7 hours of sleep a night.

4 Limit alcohol. When you drink too much alcohol, it can raise your blood pressure. Men should have no more than 2 drinks a day. Women should have no more than 1 drink a day.

5 Stop smoking and avoid secondhand smoke. Nicotine, the addictive chemical in cigarettes, speeds up your heartbeat and causes blood pressure to rise. While smokers are at the most risk, people who are around secondhand smoke can also be hurt by it.



Save Your Skin From Sunburn and Worse

As the days are warming up, you are likely enjoying more time outdoors too. Just remember to protect your skin from the sun's hidden danger when you do.

You cannot see it but mixed in with sunshine are two types of ultraviolet (UV) radiation that can harm your skin: UVA radiation is what makes skin age, while UVB radiation is what makes skin burn. Both can lead to skin cancer.

UV rays are strongest when the sun is at its peak, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. But even on a cloudy day, you may not be safe. It only takes about 15 minutes of UV exposure before damage can start.

Tips for Sun Safety

So how can you protect yourself and your family?

For one thing, it is a good idea to seek out shade when the sun is at its strongest. Instead of being in the direct sun, stay under an umbrella, covered patio or tree as much as possible.

There are also clothing choices you can make to stay safer in the sun. Look for a UPF (ultraviolet protection factor) rating on the label to find good options. Even regular long-sleeve shirts and pants can help.

A wide-brimmed hat is a great way to keep the sun off your face, scalp, ears and the back of your neck.

Finding the Right Sunscreen

Sunscreens also give you some protection from UV rays. But

choosing one can be confusing. Look for a sunscreen that is:

- Broad spectrum (protects against both UVA and UVB rays)
- SPF 30 or higher
- Water resistant

Reapply often. Be generous with how much sunscreen you use. You probably need more than you think.

Skin cancer is highly curable when caught early. Check your skin often for any spots that do not look right. If you can, see a dermatologist at least once a year for an exam.



+ health briefs

Stay Hydrated

Drink extra liquids in hot weather to replace what you lose in sweat and avoid dehydration. Make water your go-to beverage. When you are being active, aim to drink 8 ounces of water every 15 to 20 minutes. Add a few orange or lime slices for a flavor boost.



Grill Safely

Grilling can be a great way to cook healthy, tasty food. But when you fire up the grill, be careful not to set anything else ablaze. Keep the grill far away from house siding, deck railings, eaves and overhanging tree branches. Never leave a hot grill unattended.



Keep It Cool

You got a cooler for your summer picnic. But do not forget ice packs! Cold foods should stay at or below 40 degrees. If a perishable snack has been in the sun for more than 2 hours, it is time to toss it. Throw it out after 1 hour if the temperature is around 90 degrees.



COVID-19 Corner

COVID-19 Vaccines and Your Pregnancy

You want to protect yourself and your baby from illness. But like many parents-to-be, you may have questions about whether to get the COVID-19 shots. This information may help you decide.

A Lower Risk of Serious Illness

Women who are pregnant now, or recently gave birth, are at a higher risk for serious illness or death from COVID-19. COVID-19 has also been linked to preterm births, stillbirths and other problems. Getting vaccinated reduces these risks.

A Low Risk of Other Harms

The vaccine does not cause infertility, and it will not cause you to lose your baby. No link has been found between COVID-19 shots and health problems in babies, either.

Within the first 3 days after your vaccination, you may have some side effects. These are normal and may include fever, headache, muscle aches and fatigue. Because fever can cause problems during pregnancy, you should take acetaminophen if you get one.

Rare side effects include blood clots and allergic reactions. The benefits of the vaccine outweigh these risks, however. The only

people who should not get the shots are those with a known allergy to the vaccine.

It May Protect Your Baby

You may be able to pass protection to your baby through the umbilical cord or breast milk. Scientists are still learning how much immunity this provides. But it is welcome news since babies cannot be vaccinated yet.

You can get the shots anytime. There is no need to see your health care provider before you get vaccinated. However, your provider can answer any questions you still have.



COVID-19 Vaccines vs. Natural Immunity

The term *natural immunity* refers to having protection against COVID-19 after getting sick with the disease once. But do not let the word *immunity* fool you. It is not lasting. That is one reason why health experts suggest everyone get the COVID-19 vaccines, even if you already have had this illness.

Researchers followed a group of people who tested positive in 2020. About halfway through 2021, those who did not get the shots were more than twice as likely to get COVID-19 again. Another recent report found that the vaccines are 5 times more protective than natural immunity.

The bottom line: Getting the shot is the most reliable way to improve your immunity against the coronavirus. If you recently had COVID-19, ask your health care provider how soon you can get vaccinated. You may need to wait for a short time.

Managing Long COVID

A case of long COVID—when symptoms linger long past your initial illness—may affect your heart, lungs and gut. Often, it also impacts your mental well-being. To get help, look for health care providers who have experience with long COVID. Come to appointments with a list of symptoms and questions. And do not be afraid to seek second opinions. It also helps to enlist the help of a mental health professional. They can help you deal with troubles related to work and relationship changes, among other issues.

Note: This COVID-19 information was current at the time of publication. For the most up-to-date information, visit www.cdc.gov/coronavirus.



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Call **1-800-562-4620** to discuss any of the topics in this newsletter or any other health issues. Visit our Website at **www.OHPCC.org**.

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There Are Good Reasons for an Annual Checkup



You have heard you should have an annual checkup. But is a yearly visit to your health care provider necessary? Experts say it is a good idea. There are several reasons why.

Benefits of an Annual Exam

A yearly checkup can help find health problems before they get worse. This improves your chances of treatment working. During this exam, you and your provider are also more likely to talk about what preventive screenings you should be having.

Important Screenings to Discuss

Ask your provider if you are due for any of these tests:

- **Cholesterol.** Have your cholesterol checked every 4 to 6 years after you turn age 20.

- **Diabetes.** Get tested starting at age 35. If results are normal, repeat testing every 3 years.
- **Osteoporosis.** Women older than 65 should be screened. Younger women and older men should talk with their provider to find out if they are at risk.
- **Colorectal cancer screening.** Start periodic testing for this disease at age 45, or earlier if it runs in your family.
- **Breast cancer screening.** The American Cancer Society (ACS) recommends that women should get a mammogram every year starting at age 45. Women ages 55 and older have the option of getting a mammogram every 2 years or staying with the annual screenings.
- **Cervical cancer screening.** The ACS suggests that women ages 25 to 65 should be tested every 3 to 5 years depending on the type of test they have. Women older than 65 who have had normal results do not need to test.