

Getting Pressure Down

by Shoshanna Katzman



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High blood pressure is diagnosed when the force of blood pressing against the artery wall is too high for an extended period of time holding the risk of stroke, heart attack, or kidney failure. Thirty-two percent of American adults have been diagnosed with this condition – stemming from genetics or side effect from another condition – with approximately 54 percent having it under control. Regardless of cause, it is essential to identify and manage high blood pressure which includes having regular visits with a physician. They might recommend that a person record their blood pressure at home and then bring in their results to be analyzed. They may also find it necessary to recommend a medication right away.

Either way, it is advantageous for a person to make dietary and lifestyle modifications to help bring their pressure down and keep it low. There have been many studies done on the most effective ways to do so. These methods can be employed for prevention, to avoid the need for going on a blood pressure medication or to support the work of a medication. The first step in managing blood pressure begins with a low sodium diet (AHA recommends no more than 1,500 milligrams of salt per day) to help the body release excess fluid. Otherwise, ingesting too much salt raises blood pressure by causing the body to retain water – thereby increasing the volume of blood in the veins and arteries.

Sea salt as a healthier alternative to table salt still has the same amount of sodium.

And Himalayan pink salt can contain less sodium but still contributes to high blood pressure. Therefore, it is best to limit consumption of sodium for all types of salt and instead get in the habit of using a mixture of herbs and spices for seasoning food.

The second step for managing blood pressure involves reducing and managing stress levels. This can begin with making an appointment with an acupuncturist and learning

to heal oneself naturally through relaxing, centering, and breathing throughout an acupuncture treatment. It also includes finding time to meditate, listen to soothing music, curl up with a good book, and unplug oneself from everything that triggers the least bit of stress. Taking a hot bath, shower, sauna, or steam bath for 15 minutes to relax the mind-body and open up the blood vessels is another effective way to bring down elevated blood pressure – thus a great way to prevent such an occurrence. The ancient exercises of Yoga, Tai Chi, and Qigong are also recommended for managing flow of blood and energy throughout the body. This may simply involve laying down and taking slow, gentle, and deep breaths into one's lower belly. Seeking to manage blood pressure also includes getting at least 30 minutes of exercise and at least seven hours of restful sleep per day.

Working with food and drink modifications (in addition to salt intake) is the third step. This includes doing what is necessary to establish a healthy weight as it supports an easier expansion and contraction of the blood vessels along with lessening workload on the heart. Moreover, reducing a person's waistline circumference places them at lower risk for high blood pressure. Overall, it is best to eat whole foods and avoid those that are processed. Foods high in magnesium such as pumpkin seeds, chia seeds, chicken, whole grains, beans, and vegetables are known for helping the blood vessels to relax.

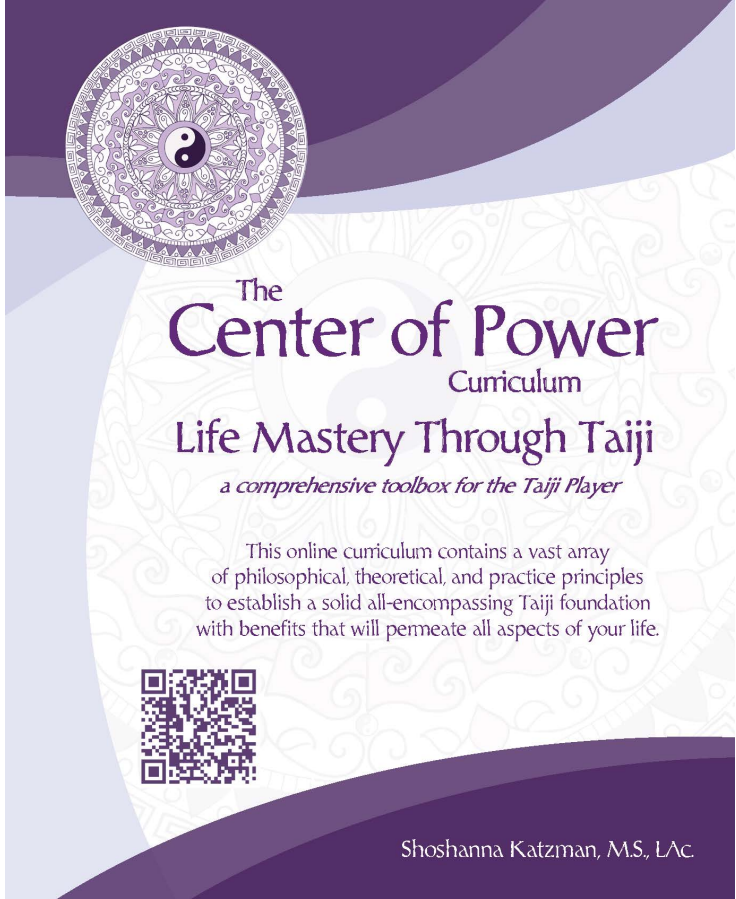
Foods that are high in potassium are also known to have a similar effect which include tomatoes, potatoes, sweet potatoes, leafy greens, avocados, apricots, bananas, melons, salmon, tuna, various beans, and dairy products. In addition, potassium promotes release of urine which contains sodium. Consuming foods high in calcium have also been reputed for lowering pressure – which

include sardines, tofu, beans, leafy greens, and dairy products.

It is also essential to avoid high levels of sugar, refined carbohydrates, caffeine, and alcohol. And absolutely avoid smoking as each cigarette temporarily raises blood pressure. Moreover, the chemicals in tobacco can damage the blood vessels.

Some sources recommend consuming dark chocolate and cacao powder due to containing flavonoids which are a natural plant compound that causes blood vessels to dilate. Eating berries are also said to be helpful due to containing a high level of polyphenols. There are a multitude of natural methods that can be done to help center, calm, and balance yourself. Take the initiative to start and have faith in your body's ability to heal itself.

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