

KEYS TO BETTER HEALTH™

May is National High Blood Pressure Education Month

One in three American adults has hypertension, also known as high blood pressure. Unfortunately, more than half of those with high blood pressure do not have their condition under control.

May is National High Blood Pressure Education Month, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is asking patients, families, and health care professionals to "make control your goal." Start by visiting your healthcare provider and talk about your blood pressure readings. If it's too high, establish a plan to lower it. Luckily, there are plenty of things you can do to reduce your blood pressure.

Eating healthy is a great way to start, and Keys To Better Health™ is here to help you find foods that lower your blood pressure (BP). A diet rich in fruits and vegetables is a good place to start, as they are packed with an abundance of BP-lowering potassium, magnesium and fiber. Five portions of fruits and vegetables each day, combined with cutting your salt intake in half, can lower your systolic blood pressure (top number in blood pressure measurement) by as much as 4mm Hg.

In addition to eating fruits and vegetables and reducing salt intake, the American Heart Association suggests you undertake regular exercise regularly, maintain a healthy weight, manage stress, avoid tobacco, drink alcohol in moderation, and comply with medication prescriptions to help keep your blood pressure at normal levels.

Plenty of tasty foods can help lower your blood pressure, such as berries. Just one serving of blueberries a week can help cut reduce your risk of high blood pressure. Strawberries and raspberries also contain natural compounds called anthocyanins that protect against hypertension. Even cereal can help, especially whole-grain, high-fiber cereals like oatmeal, oat squares, bran flakes or shredded wheat. Top your cereal with berries to double your health rewards!

While incorporating healthy foods is the key to lowering your blood pressure, it's also important to cut back significantly on your sodium intake. When eating processed foods, avoid what's known as the "Salty 6" foods extremely high in sodium -- bread and rolls, cold cuts and cured meats, pizza, poultry, prepared soup and sandwiches. You don't have to completely eliminate these foods. Instead look for heart healthy, low-sodium versions of these favorites.

Our Keys To Better Health™ nutrition labeling program makes it easy for you to select low-sodium, heart healthy foods to help keep your blood pressure in check. When you're shopping, be on the lookout for colorful tags on the shelf edges throughout the store directing you to healthy foods that are "Sodium Free," good for "Heart Health," and much more.



Please note: Information is intended for educational purposes only and does not replace advice from your doctor or health care provider. For individual recommendations, please consult with a doctor or registered dietitian.