

HYPERTENSION

What is hypertension? Hypertension or high blood pressure is a medical condition in which the blood pressure in the arteries is consistently high.

Hypertension is a risk factor for many diseases including stroke, heart failure, coronary artery disease and Kidney disease.

Hypertension can cause symptoms such as headache, nose bleeds, vision disturbances or dizziness but often doesn't present with any symptoms at all. This is why it's important to have regular check-ups with your GP.

Salt and Hypertension - Why do I need to avoid salt (sodium chloride)?

- Salt draws water, causing an increase in blood pressure, oedema and fluid retention. This puts great pressure on the kidneys which will need to work extremely hard to excrete excess sodium in your blood stream.
- Dietary salt inactivates an enzyme called nitric oxide synthase. Without this enzyme, blood vessels and arteries become rigid and inflexible. This can lead to atherosclerotic plaque building up in your vessel walls.
- Dietary salt contributes to inflammation and damage to the body, particularly in the cardiovascular, digestive and urinary systems.

How much salt should I eat?

Sodium intake of less than 2,400 mg per day (equivalent to one teaspoon) can significantly reduce blood pressure.

A diet high in vegetables and fruit provides increases in potassium and reduces sodium intake.

READ food labels, salt is found written as:

- Salt (sodium chloride)
- Monosodium glutamate (MSG)
- Baking soda (sodium bicarbonate)
- Baking powder
- Sodium propionate

Which foods do I need to AVOID/LIMIT?

- Foods high in salt: Choose no, low or salt-reduced foods. Generally, processed, packaged and pre-made meals are high in salt which is used to enhance flavour, texture and prolong the shelf life.

Sleep and Hypertension

Did you know that not getting a good night sleep can affect your blood pressure?

Research has shown that a short sleep duration and poor quality of sleep can significantly increase the risk of developing high blood pressure.

Normal blood pressure varies in a 24 hour period, with daytime pressures being higher than night time pressures. It is expected that blood pressure will drop down by 10% to 20% from that daytime baseline, especially during the second part of the night.

People who don't have that variation in blood pressure are at higher risk for cardiovascular morbidity and mortality than those who do have blood pressure variations.

So, if you're not getting good quality sleep and enough of it, you're more likely to be at risk over time of high blood pressure.

Melatonin is a hormone produced in the pineal gland of the brain and has also been found to play an important role in blood pressure regulation. Melatonin naturally peaks during sleep stages 3 and 4 and may be why lack of sleep can lead to hypertension...