



Reducing Blood Pressure Naturally



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Introduction

Just the other day, I was feeling pretty lousy. With a high temperature, feeling alternately hot and cold, it was an absolute shoo-in that I had an infection and a fever, but being a stoic, I tried to shake it off without visiting the doctor.

Unsuccessfully as it turned out, so I relented (eventually) and off I went to see the man who could fix me up.

I have a pretty good idea what is wrong and after I explain the symptoms, so does he, but here's the thing. What is the first thing that he does?

He takes my blood pressure.

I don't have a blood pressure problem as far as I am aware – I have an infection – but the first thing he does is take my BP.

Maybe this scenario sounds familiar? I would guess so, because it is almost inevitable that when you visit your doctor or any other health care professional, the first thing that they are going to do is take your blood pressure.

Perhaps you have wondered why this might be the case, why your doctor should be so concerned about your blood pressure when 90% of the time, the condition that has driven you to their office or surgery has got nothing whatsoever to do with BP.

However, if anything, you should be eternally grateful that your doctor is paying so much attention and looking after you so well, because high blood pressure is a massive problem in all developed Western countries, and the sooner you know about the problem, the better you are able to deal with it.

If your doctor or any other medical care professional diagnoses that you have a high blood pressure problem, they will undoubtedly recommend various medical treatments for your problem. And, whilst many of these treatments might be effective, there are many natural ways of treating high blood pressure that you should consider before turning to potentially harmful chemical-based pharmaceutical treatments.

This report is going to give you the lowdown on high blood pressure and how to deal with it entirely naturally. It will also highlight many of the most common medical treatments for high blood pressure and why you should consider dealing with any high blood pressure problem naturally before you turn to potentially harmful pharmaceutical solutions.

What is blood pressure, and why is it important?

In simplistic terms, blood pressure is a measurement of the force with which your blood is pumped round your body. It is the pressure that your pumping blood places on the walls of your arteries, the blood vessels that carry blood away from your heart.

The easiest way of understanding the concept of BP is to think of water pumping through a garden hose. When it does so, the water places pressure on the walls of the hose as it tries to 'escape' in any possible direction.

And in the same way that you increase the pressure on the walls of your garden hose if you increase the water flow by turning the water tap or faucet on a little more, your blood pressure increases if your heart starts pumping more blood around your body for some reason in exactly the same way.

Your exact blood pressure is measured by reference to two different factors. The first of these factors is the strength of each heartbeat, whilst the second is the resistance put up by the 'tubes' through which you blood passes, primarily your capillaries and arteries.

It is the arterioles, the tiny blood vessels that feed into the capillary network that regulate blood pressure more than any other part of your body. These arterioles expand and contract in rhythm with the beating of your heart as result of the muscular tissue in their walls. Hence, measuring blood pressure is in effect checking the strength or weakness of your heart.

Your blood pressure is measured by reference to two different numbers which represent the systolic and diastolic pressures.

The first of these, the systolic is a measurement of the highest pressure point which is recorded when the heart beats or contracts. The lower figure, the diastolic is a measurement of what is happening when your heart is at rest, effectively representing the low point of your blood pressure.

As a general rule, it is the diastolic pressure measurement which medical professionals pay most attention to, because if your diastolic

pressure is too high, it suggests that your arteries and capillaries are under too much pressure even when your heart is at rest.

In an average non stressed adult, normal blood pressure would be in the region of 120/80 [mmHg](#). In fact, the better your physical condition, the lower your diastolic pressure measurement is likely to be, with well conditioned athletes regularly recording a diastolic pressure of between 50 and 60 mmHg.

However, according to the [American Heart Association](#), nearly 1 in three adults in the USA suffers from high blood pressure.

Much more terrifyingly, it is believed that anything from one third to one half of high blood pressure sufferers are completely unaware of their condition, which is one reason why your doctor always measures your blood pressure when you visit them irrespective of the condition that has brought you to their office or surgery in the first place.

High blood pressure is known by the medical profession as hypertension, but it is also possible to suffer from a slightly less serious form of the condition known as pre-hypertension as well.

Although exact definitions of what represents high blood pressure varies to a certain degree from country to country, the [National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute](#) suggests that in the USA, systolic pressure of between 120 and 139 or a diastolic pressure of between 80 and 89 mmHg represents pre-hypertension.

Stage one hypertension is represented by systolic pressure of between 140 and 159 or diastolic pressure in the range of 90 to 99 mmHg, whilst stage two hypertension is demonstrated by a reading in excess of 160/100 mmHg.

Why does it matter?

As suggested earlier, there are huge numbers of people in the USA (and in most industrialized Western countries) who suffer from high blood pressure that are not even aware of their condition.

This is the primary reason why high blood pressure is often known as 'the silent killer' as many of the conditions to which high blood pressure contributes are often fatal. In effect, if you have high blood pressure condition that you are not aware of, you are considerably more at risk of suffering a wide variety of potentially lethal medical conditions without being in a position to take steps or measures to reduce the risk.

What are the symptoms?

One of the biggest problems for people who suffer high blood pressure is that a very significant percentage of them have no symptoms that might otherwise give them a clue that everything is not well.

Some people do of course suffer symptoms that might give them an idea that they have a blood pressure problem. Given that high blood pressure naturally means that the pressure of blood being pumped around the body is too high, there are some conditions that might suggest a high blood pressure problem.

For example, anyone who suffers persistent unexplained nosebleeds could have a high blood pressure problem as the weaker blood vessels in their nose inexplicably rupture. In a similar way, anyone who suffers from dizzy spells on a persistent basis or unexplained headaches may be suffering from high blood pressure as well as might someone who suffers blurred vision or even nausea.

For many people however, high blood pressure has no symptoms whatsoever. And even in a situation where someone is suffering a symptom that *could* suggest a blood pressure problem, these symptoms will often be so mild that it is all too easy to assume that there is nothing seriously wrong.

Similarly, it is unlikely that you would automatically assume that something like nausea or a headache is a symptom of high blood pressure. Consequently, it is far more likely that you would pop an aspirin when confronted by a condition of this nature rather than visiting your doctor for a blood pressure check.

Hence you have the reason why your doctor will check your blood pressure every time you visit. It is nothing to do with the condition that took you to their surgery or office in the first place and much more to do with the fact that you have given them an opportunity to check your blood pressure, an opportunity which they cannot afford to miss.

It becomes even more likely that your doctor will check you every time you visit as you age because it is a fact that high blood pressure is a problem that increases as you get older.

But of course, the biggest difficulty with high blood pressure is that many of the people who have the problem do nothing about countering it simply because they are unaware that there is anything wrong. Consequently, they do not seek medical care or attention until some kind of serious organ damage is suffered, by which time it is often too late.

What damage can high blood pressure cause?

To get some idea of the scale of the problem that high blood pressure can cause, think about it this way.

Every single blood vessel in your body, every area where blood is present is under increased pressure every second of every day, 24/7, 365 days a year. Every capillary, artery and vein is at risk of bursting whether you are at rest or active whilst the major organs of your body could be flooded with excess blood or just give up at any time.

Consequently, the simple answer to the question of what damage high blood pressure can cause is, everything. There is no single millimeter of your body that is 100% safe if you suffer from a high blood pressure problem.

The following (scary) litany will give you some idea of the problems that high blood pressure can cause and why you should get your blood pressure checked on a regular basis.

Heart attacks and cardiovascular disease

Heart attacks are the number one cause of death in the USA every year. Cardiovascular disease claims another victim every 35 seconds, with two half thousand US citizens dying of heart attacks every day.

High blood pressure is the number one cause of deaths from cardiovascular disease and heart attacks, with nearly 70% of people who suffer their first heart attack being a high blood pressure sufferer as well.

The major problem is the fact that high blood pressure can cause many different heart problems, any of which can be fatal.

In the most obvious example of suffering a fatal heart attack, your heart simply gives up the increased effort of having to pump blood at a higher pressure than it should.

The fact that your heart has to work harder to pump blood around your body means that over time, it will become thicker and stiffer (your heart is nothing more than a muscle) which makes it far less capable of doing the job that it is supposed to do. This often leads to an increasing degree of heart failure, an inability for your heart to do the job for which it is designed. If not treated, this will often lead to a heart attack.

An alternative scenario is one where your heart becomes enlarged because of the increased blood pressure. An enlarged heart is not capable of pumping blood as efficiently as it should do, meaning that you are once again at an increased risk of suffering a heart attack, whilst there are also many other associated medical problems that could result from a weakened or enlarged heart.

Brain problems

If cardiovascular disease and heart attacks is the number one killer in the USA, strokes are the third most common cause of death.

Uncontrolled blood pressure can result in damaged or narrow blood vessels in the brain, which in turn increases the risk of a blood vessel becoming blocked or bursting.

In this situation, restricting blood flow to a certain part of the brain can cause the cells of that particular area of your brain to cease functioning either temporarily or permanently. In effect, part of your brain dies and that carries a significant risk that you will die as well.

This is one of the reasons why if you suffer from persistent, severe headaches, you should visit your doctor as this may be a sign of impending blood vessel failure in your head. Similarly, dizziness, blurred vision, feeling inextricably weak or numb or losing the ability to talk clearly could all be signs that a stroke caused by high blood pressure could be imminent.

Another problem to which high blood pressure can contribute is a form of dementia known as vascular dementia. This occurs when a certain portion of the brain is damaged because of erratic or irregular blood flow caused by high blood pressure which causes the sufferer memory loss, confusion and sometimes a loss of speech.

Moreover, because dementia is a progressive condition, it is likely that anyone who is suffering from vascular dementia because of high blood pressure is likely to get gradually worse over time.

Kidney problems

The primary function of the kidneys is to filter your blood to remove unwanted waste products which are then discharged from the body. If however you have some kind of kidney problem or a kidney disease, the ability to function is somehow reduced, meaning that if you do not take remedial steps, kidney damage can become a serious problem.

High blood pressure can cause kidney problems, or in some cases, pre-existing kidney damage can cause high blood pressure. However, whichever way round this happens, the main problem is that kidney damage is less likely to lead to kidney failure and far more likely to lead to heart attacks and strokes.

This often happens because as your kidneys become less efficient, they are less able to filter and clean your blood, meaning that dirt and other possible blockages are left to flow around your body in the bloodstream.

Hence, if you have any kind of kidney problem, it is absolutely essential to keep your heart and blood vessels as healthy as possible which means that you must control your high blood pressure problem.

Limbs and eyes

Not only does high blood pressure have the potential to damage your heart, brain and kidneys, it can damage any area of your body where there are blood vessels. Hence, it is possible that high blood pressure can have an adverse effect on both your eyesight and your mobility.

If your doctor establishes that you have a high blood pressure problem, they will often investigate your eye because the small blood vessels, the capillaries at the back of your eye are the only blood vessels which are visible. Thus, they can investigate whether any of these capillaries have expanded, burst or suffered any other damage.

If they do so, it is highly likely that your eyesight will be adversely affected in some way. Hence, it may even be possible that a sight problem is a sign of high blood pressure and potentially something far more serious.

And because high blood pressure makes your heart become thicker and less able to do its job properly, it is not uncommon for high blood pressure sufferers to experience swollen ankles and other swollen limb extremities.

This happens because your heart is less efficient than it was before you suffered a high blood pressure problem so that it is less capable of pushing blood around your body. Hence, blood starts to accumulate in your ankles and lower legs and whilst in the short term this may be nothing more than an unsightly inconvenience, it can lead to more serious problems over the longer term such as varicose veins, cellulitis and venous ulcers.

Some high blood pressure sufferers will find that as they walk or move, they suffer painful cramping in the legs and ankle joints that goes away when they stop moving. This could be a result of peripheral arterial disease, a condition caused by a narrowing of the arteries which prevents sufficient blood being transported to the limbs, hence the pain. Peripheral arterial disease is another potentially serious condition that can be caused by high blood pressure.

Other problems and considerations

There are particular health concerns for men and women that are often associated with high blood pressure.

For instance, men who suffer from high blood pressure will sometimes suffer from erectile dysfunction as well as a result of damage to the arteries that transport blood to the penis to enable and sustain an erection.

Some women will suffer increased blood pressure as a result of pregnancy, a condition which can sometimes continue for a number of weeks after the baby had been born. Generally speaking, high blood pressure of this nature is likely to be nothing more than temporary, although if it does persist for anything more than a few weeks after your baby is born, you need to seek medical advice.

On the other hand, if you already suffer from high blood pressure, it is perfectly possible and feasible to enjoy a completely normal pregnancy and birth, although once again, seeking medical advice as soon as possible after discovering your pregnancy is an absolute must.

Hormone replacement therapy is another thing to be a little wary of in terms of high blood pressure, because HRT generally includes estrogen which is a hormone that is known to increase blood pressure.

At the same time, an increase in blood pressure at or around the time you start HRT does not necessarily mean that it is a hormone replacement therapy that has caused an increase in pressure.

As previously suggested, it is a natural side-effect of growing older that your blood pressure goes up, so they could be an element of ageing involved in the increased pressure that comes on around the time you start HRT.

In a similar way, many oral contraceptive pills contain estrogen as well, so using oral contraceptives of this particular type can also pose a risk of increased blood pressure too.

One final important consideration is that if you are a diabetes sufferer, high blood pressure can be a very serious problem indeed. As a diabetic, the risk of suffering heart problems, strokes and kidney disease are increased whilst having high blood pressure has the potential to exacerbate these problems still further. Hence, if you are a diabetic, high blood pressure is a condition that you need to seek treatment for as soon as possible.

What causes high blood pressure?

There are two different types of high blood pressure, essential or primary hypertension and secondary hypertension. According to the American Heart Association, there is no single identifiable cause of primary hypertension, although the causes of secondary hypertension are usually relatively easily identifiable.

However, in the case of primary hypertension, there are many factors that are known to make the condition more likely, and it is a combination of these factors that most commonly causes high blood pressure. These factors include:

- Being seriously overweight or obese. It stands to reason that the greater your body mass is, the harder your heart is going to have to work to pump blood around it. Consequently, there is an increase in pressure on the arterial walls as more blood is produced to supply the necessary oxygen and nutrients throughout your bigger than normal body mass.
- Sleep apnea – brief periods when you stop breathing whilst asleep – is also considered to be a contributory factor to having high blood pressure and is something that overweight people are particularly susceptible to.
- Activity levels can also be a contributory factor. If you are relatively inactive or do not take any exercise, it tends to increase your heart rate, meaning that your heart works harder to pump blood around the body. And of course, it follows that if you are completely sedentary and do not take exercise, this is likely to exacerbate your weight problems as well.
- Family history or genetics. It is a fact that high blood pressure can often run in particular families, with the condition being seen generation after generation. If therefore you have a family history of high blood pressure, it is quite likely that you will have a similar problem.
- Tobacco use. Certain chemicals in cigarettes and tobacco itself can cause damage to blood vessel walls, thereby increasing the work that your heart has to do to pump blood around your body.
- Stress can be a big contributory factor as far as high blood pressure is concerned.

- Sodium intake. Excessive sodium intake can result in increased fluid retention, which in turn leads to increased blood pressure.
- Potassium intake. Taking on board excessively low levels of potassium can result in elevated levels of sodium in body cells because potassium and sodium seek a natural balance in those cells. If one is therefore in the ascendancy, its characteristics are also more likely to be seen.
- Excessive alcohol consumption can increase the risk of heart problems, particularly if this excessive consumption is continued for a significant period of time.

Secondary hypertension problems are generally caused by pre-existing medical conditions such as [renal stenosis](#) or some other form of [renal disease](#) or heart problems such as [aortic coarctation](#).

In the case of secondary hypertension, it is therefore likely that your medical condition which has caused your high blood pressure is already being treated, and part of that treatment is likely to be focused on dealing with your blood pressure problems.

Whilst it cannot be said that this lessens the severity of high blood pressure problems caused by secondary hypertension, it does suggest that these problems are far more likely to be effectively managed. After all, as has been suggested, one primary hypertension problem is the fact that many millions of people have high blood pressure and are not even aware of the fact.

This is obviously not the case when someone has secondary hypertension as a result of another serious medical condition. Hence, it is highly likely that their blood pressure problem will be under control.

Medical treatments for hypertension

The first thing to understand about medical treatments for hypertension is that none of them are intended to address the root cause of your high blood pressure problem. Every medical treatment that is going to be recommended by your doctor or other medical professional is designed to control your high blood pressure problem, rather than 'cure' it.

The following summarizes some of the most common treatments prescribed for dealing with high blood pressure and highlights some of the potential adverse side-effects.

When reading through these notes, be aware that it is very common for doctors to prescribe a combination of these drugs rather than just one, because in this way, they can keep the dosage of each drug relatively light instead of prescribing a large dose of just one treatment.

Research and empirical evidence has suggested that a combination of relatively small dosages of several different medicines is often far more effective than a large dosage of just one, hence many doctors will adopt this approach.

When you first visit your doctor to seek medical attention for high blood pressure problem, you must always tell them your full medical history, focusing in particular on liver or kidney problems, diabetes, gout, allergies and urinary problems. All of these conditions may have some effect on the medicines that your doctor prescribes, so it is absolutely essential to make sure that they are in possession of a complete medical history before you seek medical treatment for high blood pressure.

Diuretics

[Thiazide diuretics](#) are medications that help your kidneys expel sodium and water which in turn helps to reduce blood volume. In many cases, diuretics are often the first medicine that will be prescribed to deal with hypertension because it is very common to find that reducing the amount of fluid in the body is an effective way of reducing blood pressure at the same time.

Drugs of this nature can make you dizzy and lightheaded, particularly when you first start taking them. Blurred vision, a loss of appetite, headaches and a general feeling of weakness and ennui may be encountered, especially in the early days, but these feelings should pass

relatively quickly. If they do not do so, you need to report the fact to your doctor as he (or she) may need to change the medication.

Beta blockers

Beta blockers work by reducing the workload on your heart whilst also opening up your blood vessels at the same time. In this way, they cause your heart to beat more slowly and with less force which obviously reduces your blood pressure. For some people, beta blockers on their own are not especially effective for reducing hypertension but they are more effective when taken in combination with diuretics.

There are many different beta blockers that your doctor may prescribe including Acebutolol (Sectral), Bisoprolol (Zebeta), Nadolol (Corgard) and Propranolol (Inderal LA) to name but a few.

In general, all of these medicines have the ability to make you feel dizzy, listless, lightheaded and generally fatigued. As they also reduce your blood pressure, you might also find that you suffer from cold hands, fingers or toes as the blood flow to the extremities of your body gradually decreases with the lowering of your blood pressure.

Less commonly, patients who are taking beta blockers sometimes experience difficulty sleeping, a shortness of breath, depression and a lack of sex drive.

Once again, all of these side-effects should wear off relatively quickly so if they do not do so, you need to consult your medical attendant to seek further attention.

Angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors

These are medicines that help to relax your blood vessels whilst also making them more flexible by inhibiting the growth of a natural chemical that otherwise restricts blood flow through these vessels by narrowing them. ACE inhibitors are another group of medicines that work best when taken in combination with diuretics rather than on their own.

Another closely related group of medicines are the Angiotensin II receptor blockers which limit the production of Angiotensin II. This is another powerful chemical enzyme which your body produces that tightens the muscles surrounding your blood vessels, thereby constricting them.

Hence, by taking inhibitors that limit the production of both Angiotensin and Angiotensin II, you minimize the risk of your blood vessels being narrowed as they would be if you were not inhibiting the production of these enzymes.

In both cases, your doctor is unlikely to prescribe either of these inhibiting medicines if you are pregnant or if you have suffered (or are still suffering) renal arterial stenosis. Furthermore, anyone else who has previously suffered a strong reaction to ACE inhibitors of any kind is probably best advised to avoid taking them.

For other people, the most common side-effects of taking these inhibitors are coughs, headache, weakness, drowsiness and rashes. In some people, the side-effects can be tasted as normal food or drink tastes become excessively salty or metallic, whilst ACE inhibitors will sometimes reduce blood pressure too far and cause elevated potassium levels.

In all of these situations, should adverse side effects arise, you must seek immediate medical attention.

Renin inhibitors

[Renin](#) is a natural chemical enzyme that regulates the mean arterial blood pressure of your body. If you have too much renin being produced, it leads to high blood pressure, so taking a renin inhibitor such as Aliskiren (Tekturna) slows down the production of the enzyme and therefore helps to reduce hypertension.

The drug works by stopping rennin from starting the processes that lead to the increased production of blood. However, as Tekturna is still a relatively new arrival on the market, it is still being studied to ascertain ideal dosages and long-term effects.

For the same reason, the possible adverse side effects of taking the drug are not completely established or understood either although [it is suggested](#) that the most common side-effect is likely to be diarrhea, although other people have suffered allergic reactions – swelling in the face and lips – or rashes.

On the flipside of the coin, it is reported on the [Medical News Today](#) website that this particular drug might have additional benefits for people whose hypertension is a result of being overweight or obese.

Calcium channel blockers

[Calcium channel blockers](#) are an effective treatment for hypertension in older people or those who have difficulty reducing their sodium intake as they work by slowing your heart rate whilst also relaxing the muscles in the blood vessel walls at the same time. Through this combination of effects, calcium channel blockers reduce the amount of blood being pumped around the body whilst also ensuring that restricted blood vessels do not increase pressure either.

Drugs like Amlodipine (Norvasc), Enalapril Maleate-Felodipine ER (Lexxel) and Nisoldipine (Sular) can all cause dizziness, light-headedness and headaches as well as fluid buildup in the legs and intermittent rapid heart rate. In addition, other calcium channel blockers such as Diltiazem (Cardizem SR, Dilacor XR, Taztia or Tiazac) and Verapamil (Calan SR or Isoptin SR) have been known to cause slow heart rates and constipation.

If these are not effective...

When you first visit your medical attendant with a hypertension problem, it is likely that between the two of you, you will set a goal, a level to which you want to bring your blood-pressure numbers down.

In general, it is likely that your doctor will prescribe a combination of the drugs already highlighted in this chapter and that if you choose to use these pharmaceutical chemical-based drugs, you may well reach your objective. If however you do not, there are other drugs that your doctor might describe in an attempt to bring your blood pressure figures down to a level at which you are both satisfied.

These drugs might include [alpha blockers](#) which reduce the effect of natural chemicals in the body that would otherwise cause blood vessels to contract or alpha beta blockers such as [Carvedilol](#) (Coreg). It has been reported that these drugs may have adverse side effects such as dizziness, diarrhea, dry eyes, depression and tiredness in the case of alpha blockers and [nightmares plus panic attacks](#) caused by carvedilol.

Another alternative that your doctor may prescribe are [Vasodilators](#), drugs that work on the muscles in the blood vessel walls to prevent them tightening which would in turn increase blood pressure.

Commonly reported side-effects of taking vasodilators include dizziness, headaches, diarrhea and a loss of appetite. In more extreme cases,

these side-effects might extend to chest pains, muscle and joint pain, bloating, fever and a sore throat. In all cases of adverse side-effects, you must always seek medical advice as soon as possible.

In addition, the best known and most commonly prescribed vasodilator [Minoxidil](#) may cause an increase in hair growth on the face, head and body. Some people may find troublesome or unpleasant.

If you hit your target...?

As suggested, when you first consult your medical attendant about your hypertension, it is likely that they will give you a goal, systolic and diastolic numbers to which they want you to reduce your blood pressure to.

If you manage to successfully hit this target, many doctors will suggest that you take an aspirin every day to keep your blood pressure levels down in the future. If you do so, this is unlikely to cause any major problems for the vast majority of people, but you should nevertheless be aware that even the humble, common or garden aspirin can have adverse side-effects, particularly if taken on a long-term basis.

As it is likely that your doctor will expect you to take your aspirin every day for the rest of your life, there could not be a situation which defines 'long-term basis' more accurately. You should therefore be aware that long-term use of aspirin has been shown to increase the risk of gastrointestinal bleeding, plus a few people have been known to suffer allergic reactions such as hives, rashes or swelling due to [salicylate sensitivity](#).

Far more rarely, taking aspirin has caused some people to suffer [Reye's syndrome](#), a potentially fatal condition that causes damage to many organs, particularly the liver and brain.

Whilst suffering an adverse reaction to aspirin is not something that 99% of people will need to concern themselves with, you should nevertheless be aware that there are people who are aspirin intolerant.

To sum up medical treatment for hypertension...

As suggested in this chapter, the majority of medical treatments that might be prescribed to combat hypertension do have potential side-effects.

In most cases, these side-effects are likely to be relatively mild and temporary but this fact is never a guaranteed given. Some people will suffer far more serious adverse side-effects whilst others will find that their side-effects linger considerably longer than expected.

The bottom line is, as with all chemical-based pharmaceuticals, there is always a risk of adverse side-effects ranging from extremely mild – almost unnoticeable – to very severe and those side-effects can be purely temporary or they might last longer than you expected.

It is also extremely pertinent to repeat that none of these medical treatments for high blood pressure deal with the central problem, instead being focused on reducing the severity of the symptoms.

Rather than just reducing the severity of the symptoms, it would in truth make far more sense to isolate and attack the root cause of your hypertension problem whilst reducing the severity of the symptoms at the same time totally naturally.

Resistant hypertension

If you have been following your medical attendants advice and have been taking a cocktail of three drugs (which is the most common number) for your hypertension and you still have not achieved the results you want to achieve, then you have what is known as resistant hypertension.

Similarly, if you are taking a cocktail of four or more drugs which between them have enabled you to achieve your target, you are similarly suffering from resistant hypertension because you needed to take more drugs that is usual to bring your condition under control.

The bad news side of resistant hypertension is that despite all of your best efforts so far, your high blood pressure problem has not been brought under control, or has been controlled but with too many drugs.

The good news on the other hand is that just because you are suffering resistant hypertension does not necessarily mean that you are never going to be able to reduce your blood pressure. All that it means is that you are going to have the work with your doctor or perhaps with a hypertension consultant to dig a little deeper to try to identify the cause of your problem.

Once you have done so and identified why you suffer from hypertension, you can then begin to address the problems at their root, an action which should ultimately mean that you get rid of your hypertension problem once and for all.

There is a certain irony involved here. It is only because you have resistant hypertension, hypertension the symptoms of which cannot be reduced by adopting 'normal medical practices' that your doctor or a specialist is forced to find the time to try to get to the root cause of your problem.

Nevertheless, if you are suffering from resistant hypertension, this is exactly what your doctor or more likely a specialist in analyzing blood pressure problems will have to do.

As you will discover a little later, the root cause of your hypertension will often be relatively simple to discover and analyze. However, there may be situations where the cause of your problem is not at all obvious,

particularly if that underlying cause is something of which you are not even aware yourself. For example, if you are suffering from undiagnosed kidney problems or have periods of sleep apnea every night, these may be causing your hypertension and you are not even aware that the problem exists.

Much more commonly however, the root cause of hypertension is generally relatively easy to discover, and in many cases, it is a root cause that can be tackled entirely naturally.

Lifestyle and diet

As suggested previously, there are many lifestyle and diet factors that can play a significant role in increasing your blood pressure. In a large percentage of cases, tackling the faults or weaknesses in the lifestyle that you currently enjoy will help to reduce your blood pressure fairly quickly.

Many of these changes are also common sense lifestyle modifications that will increase your general health and wellness at the same time as reducing your blood pressure. Thus, there are plenty of arguments for adopting the strategies that you going to read of from this point on.

Let us start with some of the most obvious changes that you should start to make right now.

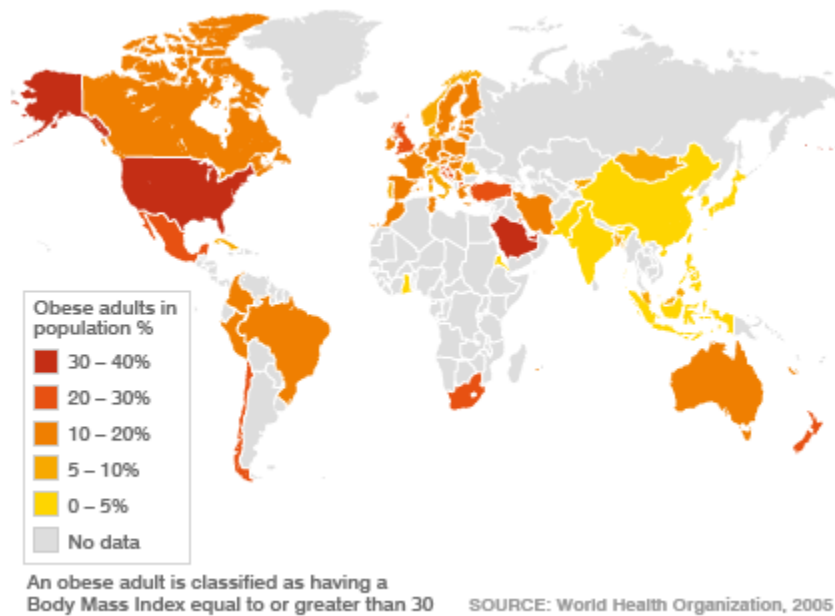
Weighty matters...

Of course, you knew that this was going to come up but it is an inescapable fact that if you are overweight or obese, this single factor is likely to be one of the major things causing your hypertension problem.

You have no choice on this one. If you seriously want to get rid of hypertension, you must lose weight.

It is absolutely no coincidence whatsoever that as obesity levels have skyrocketed over the past couple of decades, the incidence of hypertension has also increased at a significantly increased rate at the same time.

THE GLOBAL OBESITY PROBLEM



Losing weight is a simple matter of taking on board less energy than you need every day, with the energy in your food being measured in calories or kilo-calories. You need so much energy every day based on your age, gender, activity levels and current weight, and if you eat (and drink) less than you need, you will lose weight.

Now, you are probably aware that there are plenty of fancy and often expensive diet plans around, but the reality is, you do not a 'trick' diet regime to lose weight quickly and safely. All you need to do is calculate approximately how many calories you need every day before switching to a diet that is more focused on eating healthy foods whilst also consuming less calories than you need every day.

This chart of calorific requirements provided by the [International Fitness Association](#) which is presented on [this website](#) will give you some indication of the amount of energy you need to take on board every day in order to maintain your current weight.

Your basal metabolic rate is the basic minimum number of calories that are required to maintain your body weight based on average body composition. To calculate your basal metabolic rate:

$$\text{Basal Metabolic Rate (BMR)} = 24 \times \text{Weight (lb)} / 2.2$$

OR

$$\text{Basal Metabolic Rate (BMR)} = 24 \times \text{Weight (kg)}$$

The BMR is then multiplied by a number representing the individuals activity level:

Sedentary	Light	Medium	Heavy
BMR * 1.45	BMR * 1.60	BMR * 1.70	BMR * 1.88

Activity	Calories Expended	Activity	Calories Expended
<i>Aerobics</i>	620	<i>Bicycling 12mph</i>	620
<i>Running 5mph</i>	500	<i>Ski Machine</i>	550
<i>Walking 4mph</i>	230	<i>Swimming</i>	470
<i>Soccer</i>	370	<i>Stair Master</i>	350

You do not need a fancy, fashionable diet plan to lose weight. All you need to do is reduce your calories to below the level that you need according to your age, gender and lifestyle, and you will lose weight.

However, if there is one diet plan that you should give serious consideration to following, it is the ['Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension' or DASH Diet](#) which is a diet plan specifically formulated to reduce hypertension. This particular diet plan has been approved by many governmental and semi-governmental bodies such as the American Heart Association and The National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute. It has been proved to reduce hypertension in as little as 14 days although it should be stressed that this was in people who only suffered relatively mild hypertension in the first place.

To buy the 28 day meal plans contained in the book will cost you \$21.95 plus shipping and handling, but as there is a significant amount of information about the diet on the website itself, there is probably no

need to buy the book unless you want to follow the 28 day plan to the letter:

Specifically the DASH diet plan includes:

Type of food	Number of servings for 1600 - 3100 Calorie diets	Servings on a 2000 Calorie diet
Grains and grain products (include at least 3 whole grain foods each day)	6 - 12	7 - 8
Fruits	4 - 6	4 - 5
Vegetables	4 - 6	4 - 5
Low fat or non fat dairy foods	2 - 4	2 - 3
Lean meats, fish, poultry	1.5 - 2.5	2 or less
Nuts, seeds, and legumes	3 - 6 per week	4 - 5 per week
Fats and sweets	2 - 4	limited

With the DASH Diet, you are eating to both reduce your weight and your hypertension at the same time. However, even if you choose not to follow this particular plan, the 'servings' guide in the previous screen shot is a very good basis for sensible eating that will reduce your weight.

If you can reduce your weight, it is almost inevitable that your hypertension will decrease at the same time, so if you are overweight, you know what needs to be done.

There is however one thing to bear in mind. You need to make sure that you are taking on board enough potassium to counterbalance the sodium that will otherwise encourage fluid retention. There is an extremely useful guide to potassium rich foods with comparative figures for sodium content on [this webpage](#) to which you should refer or search the net for 'potassium rich foods':

Table of foods rich in Potassium:

Potassium rich foods	Potassium Content	Sodium content	RDA % *	Calories
Soya flour	1650mg	9mg	47%	450
Black treacle	1500mg	97mg	43%	260
Apricots ready-to-eat	1380mg	15mg	39%	160
Bran Wheat	1160mg	28mg	33%	200
Tomato Puree	1150mg	240mg	33%	70
Sultanas	1050mg	20mg	30%	275
Raisins	1020mg	60mg	30%	270
Potato chips (crisps UK)	1000mg	1000mg	29%	450
All Bran	1000mg	900mg	29%	260
Wheatgerm	950mg	5mg	27%	300
Figs	900mg	60mg	26%	100
Dried mixed fruit	880mg	48mg	25%	230
Bombay Mix	790mg	800mg	23%	500
Papadums	750mg	2400mg	22%	370
Currants	720mg	14mg	22%	270
Sultana Bran	660mg	700mg	19%	300
Seeds average	650mg	20mg	18%	500

Exercise is vital too...

Exercise should form an integral part of any sensible weight loss program as well. Taking up exercise always accelerates the effectiveness of sticking to a weight loss diet plus taking no exercise is bad for your heart and your general health in any case.

On the other hand, there is no need or sense in trying to become a athlete overnight if you have done nothing more strenuous than lifting your coffee cup in the morning for the past few years. Take it easy because if you try to do too much exercise too soon, you are likely to injure yourself which will prevent you undertaking the exercise that you need to take.

Start off by walking as far as you can as quickly as possible. It doesn't really matter if the first time you go for a walk, you can only manage half a kilometer very slowly. Go out the next day and try to get a few hundred meters further at a slightly increased pace and gradually build up your distances and speeds from there.

Alternatively, you could take up something that is perhaps more gentle but nevertheless equally aerobically beneficial such as swimming. Swimming has the advantage that it exercises every muscle in the body at the same time, plus there is no shock on your joints (particularly your knees and ankles) as there might be if you are walking or jogging.

As you may have realized by now, one of the ironies of losing weight is that you almost always lose weight quicker when you are larger, with weight loss inevitably slowing down the closer you get to your target weight. Thus, it might be tempting to do a little bit more exercise than you should do more quickly than is advisable in an effort to shift the last few stubborn pounds.

If you're going to do this, it is far safer to do so in a swimming pool than it is to try to get rid of the extra weight running further and faster than you have previously on hard tarmac or concrete.

Perhaps you think that you don't have time to take exercise but leaving aside for the moment the fact that you *have* to get exercise if you want to lower your blood pressure, there is always a way of doing least some exercise.

For example, if you use public transport to get from your home to the office every day, how about getting off the bus or subway a few stops early to walk the last few hundred meters? You might need to leave home five minutes earlier in order to be able to do this but setting your alarm clock to wake you just that little bit earlier should not be a major problem when compared to the benefits that doing this will bring.

If you travel by car and work in an office block, how about climbing the stairs instead of using the elevator? A few flights of stairs represent wonderful aerobic exercise, exactly the kind of thing that you need to give your heart and body a good workout. If on the other hand you have not got the time to do this in the morning, take 10 minutes of your lunch break to do some stair climbing.

Remember, whilst one of the primary reasons that you're doing exercise is to help accelerate your metabolism in an effort to shift some weight, it is also a fact that exercise helps to make your general lifestyle far more healthy and conducive to lower blood pressure.

Hence, even after you hit your target weight and presumably find that your hypertension problem has dissipated or perhaps even disappeared altogether, you should nevertheless continue with your daily exercise

routines. Whilst you're no longer exercising to lose weight, you nevertheless need to maintain your reduced weight if you want to keep your blood pressure levels low so taking a reasonable amount of exercise two or three times a week is absolutely essential.

Other necessary lifestyle changes...

As suggested earlier, too much sodium encourages excess fluid retention which in turn leads to hypertension. Hence, you should reduce your sodium intake and the easiest way of doing so is to reduce the amount of salt you eat every day.

The current daily salt intake 'ceiling' for an otherwise healthy adults is [2.3 grams of salt every day in the USA](#), whilst in the UK (which has a similar problem with most people consuming way too much salt), the recommended [maximum salt intake is 4 grams daily](#).

Both of these figures are way too high if you are serious about defeating hypertension. In this case, you would be better sticking to 1.5 grams or less if you genuinely want to reduce your blood pressure.

One very obvious way of reducing the amount of salt that you consume every day is to make a concerted effort not to add salt to your food before consuming it. You should also limit the amount of salt you use when cooking as well. Instead of using half a teaspoon of salt when you boil the potatoes, use a quarter of a teaspoon or less as one example.

However, you should also look out for the amount of salt in canned and frozen foods as well as in processed foods too. Some of these foods are very high in salt, so make sure that you research what you are eating before you do so.

And don't forget to add five or six portions of fruit and vegetables to your diet every day in order to make sure that you get enough potassium. Although there are no specific guidelines laid down, it is probably fair to say that you should consume potassium and sodium on a one-to-one ratio, whereas in the USA and the UK, the current ratio is properly nearer six to one in favor of sodium.

Reducing the amount of salt you eat is the quickest and easiest way of limiting your sodium intake which is in turn a very effective way of reducing blood pressure.

As mentioned earlier, both smoking and drinking are bad for your blood pressure, with alcohol having the ability to raise blood pressure even in people who do not normally suffer from hypertension.

For this reason, you should limit your alcohol intake, with women and anyone over 65 taking no more than one drink a day whilst average, healthy males are allowed no more than two a day.

You should also avoid smoking completely as well, as tobacco speeds up the process of hardening the arteries and damages blood vessel walls as well. If you are a smoker who suffers hypertension, you therefore face a double hazard from cigarettes in terms of the damage you are doing to yourself. If you suffer hypertension and you want to get rid of the problem as effectively as possible, you cannot continue to smoke, it's as simple as that.

In order to give up smoking, talk to your doctor to see what assistance or advice he or she can give you and search the net for appropriate information [such as this page](#) taken from a 'Stop Smoking' leaflet produced by the US Department of Health.

Stress is literally killing you...

Stress is a factor that often contributes to hypertension problems, as tension naturally makes the heart pump more strongly. It is therefore essential that if you are a person who is naturally prone to stress or if you work or home environment is overly stressful, you need to learn how to keep your stress levels down.

Doing so is the only way that you will be able to reduce your blood pressure if stress is a major contributory factor, so learning how to [effectively combat stress](#) is essential.

There are many different things that you can study and learn about which will help you to master the art of controlling stress.

The first thing that you should consider is taking up a discipline or hobby like yoga or meditation that can teach various different techniques for keeping stress under control.

The best thing is that as a starting point, there is a great deal of the information that you need to see whether yoga or mediation is 'your thing' on the net, for free. This means that you can start learning and practicing yoga or meditation in the comfort of your own home and that once you have mastered the basics, you can then take things another step further by joining a local group or class.

Whilst many people who take up yoga or meditation spend a good deal of time practicing on their own – it is certainly one highly effective way of minimizing stress – others equally enjoy the social aspect of joining a class or a group.

If you want to learn the basics of yoga and how practicing yoga can help to relieve stress and tension, [this eHow page](#) is a good place to start. As stated on the page, yoga is all about learning to focus your energies and concentration in a constructive way, learning to control your mind rather than allowing your mind to control you and the way you live your life.

Practicing yoga is a great way of acquiring the discipline that you need to be able to switch off at those times when stress might otherwise take over. As you can read, there are various different types of yoga that you can practice ranging from 'gentle' (sometimes called 'hatha') yoga to the far more impressive sounding 'power' (or 'vinyasa') yoga.

You can do some research on the net for further information about all of the different types of yoga, decide which appeals to you most and start to put into practice what you read whenever you have a few spare moments available.

Another factor about yoga to consider is that there are several yogic asanas (poses) that are believed to help relive high blood pressure as well. Various asanas such as [suryanamaskar](#) (the 'sun pose'), [matsyasana](#) (the 'fish pose'), [vajrasana](#) (the 'thunderbolt pose') and [shavasana](#) ('corpse pose') are all useful for reducing high blood pressure with regular practice. This is obviously another good reason for thinking of taking up yoga.

An alternative way of learning to relax and de-stress so that you remove one major contributory factor for hypertension from your life is to take up **meditation**. There are many [types of meditation](#) that you can practice but they are all aimed at introducing a new element of calm and relaxation into your life.

Take a look at the different styles and objectives of the various different forms of meditation and then do some more research about those styles of meditation that 'say' the most to you. You may start by learning a [simple daily meditation](#).

Even something as simple as disciplining yourself to breathe deeply and slowly whenever you encounter a situation which otherwise might become stressful can be an extremely powerful way of learning to control your emotions. As with the other disciplines highlighted in this chapter, there are many different ways of teaching yourself how to breathe deeply and slowly when things start to go wrong, but perhaps the easiest strategy for learning how to control your breathing is to adopt the [Pavlov method of learning to breathe deeply](#).

This method is an adaptation of the methods that Pavlov used when he was conducting his famous experiments on dogs, with both the breathing training and the canine version based on what are known as 'conditioned reflexes'. In essence, Pavlov's work with dogs proved that dogs reflexes could be 'trained' and this is essentially what the breath training method does too, teaching you to breathe deeply as a reflex reaction every time you hit a stressful situation.

I've tried many other methods of learning to de-stress with deep breathing but this is a method that I have found to be the most effective of all different deep breathing training tactics I have seen.

It is one that I would definitely recommend you adopt to teach yourself how to breathe deeply and slowly whenever stress threatens. Do this and you can significantly reduce the amount of stress you feel in your life, which should in turn help to reduce your hypertension.

One modern option to help you to learn deep breathing is a smart little device known as [Resperate](#) that can be bought over the counter or online. This FDA approved device 'studies' your breathing patterns and then creates a unique rhythm comprised of two different sounds, one for inhaling and one for exhaling. By listening to this rhythm, you naturally attune your breathing to the pattern that it suggests thus training you to breathe deeply and slowly. There is a demo of [how it works here](#).

Remember that stress is one of the major contributory factors as far as high blood pressure is concerned, so learning any of the techniques highlighted in this chapter to reduce your stress levels will almost inevitably help you to reduce hypertension at the same time.

Controlling blood pressure with nutrients, herbs and supplements

Trace minerals...

We have already mentioned the importance of potassium and how it is absolutely essential that you take on at least as much potassium every day as you do sodium.

This is because potassium helps to regulate the electrolyte balance in your body which controls muscle and heart contractions and as previously suggested, sodium and potassium are competing for the same 'space'. Too much sodium and the potassium loses out, so more potassium and less sodium is the way forward for anyone who has hypertension.

However, a third mineral that is essential in helping to combat hypertension is magnesium because magnesium is essential for the production of [adenosine triphosphate or ATP](#) for short.

In essence, ATP is a natural chemical compound inside your body which provides the power or the energy for every individual part of your body to function correctly. When your heart beats, it is the breakdown of ATP that is powering that heartbeat as well as every move every other muscle of your body makes as well.

Adenosine triphosphate is essential if all of your internal bodily balances are to be maintained at the correct levels live in the shower and including your blood pressure. Hence having enough magnesium in your body is extremely important, because without magnesium, ATP tends not to do its job correctly. Moreover, as magnesium also helps to control proper muscle function (remember, your heart is nothing but a muscle), making sure that you are taking sufficient amount of magnesium on board every day is essential.

Some foods are naturally rich in magnesium, and if at all possible, you should include a healthy selection of these foods in your diet every day:

<i>Foods High in Magnesium</i>	<i>Serving Size</i>	<i>Magnesium (mg)</i>
Beans, black	1 cup	120
Broccoli, raw	1 cup	22
Halibut	1/2 fillet	170
Nuts, peanuts	1 oz	64
Okra, frozen	1 cup	94
Oysters	3 oz	49
Plantain, raw	1 medium	66
Rockfish	1 fillet	51
Scallop	6 large	55
Seeds, pumpkin and squash	1 oz (142 seeds)	151
Soy milk	1 cup	47
Spinach, cooked	1 cup	157
Tofu	1/4 block	37
Whole grain cereal, ready-to-eat	3/4 cup	24
Whole grain cereal, cooked	1 cup	56
Whole wheat bread	1 slice	24

USDA Nutrient Database for Standard References, Release 15 for Magnesium, Mg (mg)

In this way, you avoid the necessity of taking supplements to add additional trace minerals to your diet, which is always a wise move because it is almost impossible to take on board too much magnesium from food whereas the same cannot always be said if you are using supplements.

Coenzyme Q10 (CoQ)

Coenzyme Q10 was first isolated by Dr. Fred Crane of the University of Wisconsin in 1957, since when studies have indicated that CoQ is effective for dealing with many medical conditions, including hypertension. At the same time, it is also believed that it strengthens the heart and helps to boost the immune system, with significant anti-oxidant properties as well.

As far as reducing blood pressure is concerned, a recent analysis of available research data carried out by Prof. Frank Rosenfeld, the Director of the Cardiac Research Unit at the Alfred Hospital in Melbourne, Australia (published in the [Journal of Human Hypertension](#)

[in April 2007](#)) gave a very clear indication that the efficacy of CoQ as a treatment for hypertension is proven. In fact, after meta-analysis of the results of 12 clinical trials involving 362 patients, the research group concluded that Coenzyme Q10 has the capacity to lower systolic blood pressure by up to 17 mmHg and diastolic pressure by up to 10 mmHg with no noticeable adverse side-effects.

Garlic

The first written records of garlic were apparently created some 5000 years ago since which time, garlic has undoubtedly been one of the most useful herbal remedies known to man for a very wide range of different medical conditions. Helping to bring down blood pressure is one of them.

In analysis of seven trials of garlic as a supplement to combat high blood pressure, three tests demonstrated that garlic has the ability to reduce systolic pressure whilst the other four reported that it lowered diastolic pressure (in all cases, they were testing one or the other, not both pressure readings, hence the different results).

However, if you are thinking of supplementing your diet with additional garlic in the form of garlic oil, tables or capsules, do be aware that it is known that garlic can thin your blood. Hence, it is clear that people who already use anticoagulants such as warfarin should be very cautious about using garlic in this way. Talk to your doctor or other health care professional before doing so.

Nevertheless, as garlic is excellent for reducing the chances of thrombosis (strokes) and hardening of the arteries, it is definitely a herbal remedy you should consider before turning to chemical based drugs.

Hawthorn

The herb hawthorn is one that is often used a treatment for high blood pressure by traditional herbal practitioners.

There is some evidence that hawthorn is quite effective for reducing hypertension, so it is a natural treatment that you might consider using.

In a randomized test carried out in the UK, test subjects were separated into two groups, with one group receiving hawthorn extract every day for four months whilst the other group received a placebo. Of the test subjects, nearly three-quarters were already taking medication for high blood pressure.

At the end of the trial period, all the test subjects taking the hawthorn extract showed a significant improvement in blood pressure levels, with a mean improvement of a 2.6 mmHg drop in diastolic pressure. Hawthorn extract is therefore a herbal blood pressure remedy that works, so it is definitely something worth trying if you are a hypertension sufferer.

Fish oil

Early indications from several small studies have indicated that fish oil (most particularly essential oil omega-3) seem to have the effect of reducing blood pressure for many hypertension sufferers. Although the exact reason why this happens is still not particularly clear, it appears likely that the effective ingredient that gives fish oil this ability is probably DHA or [Docosahexaenoic acid](#).

Other possible herbal and home remedies for high blood pressure

Besides the natural blood pressure treatments highlighted above, there are plenty more herbal or home remedies that I have seen some people use and subsequently swear by. Try any of the following, because they might work for you as well!

- Add one teaspoon of cayenne pepper to half a cup of warm water and drink the mixture immediately.
- The juice of half a lemon squeezed into warm water and taken every two hours is a blood pressure remedy that seems to work for some people.
- One teaspoon of fenugreek seeds taken with water every morning and evening for 10-15 days is another herbal remedy for high blood pressure that many people swear by.
- A teaspoon of [Indian gooseberry \(amla\)](#) extract mixed with milk and taken every morning and evening is another herbal remedy for hypertension that is recommended on many websites and in some offline reference works as well.
- Soaking your lower legs and ankles in warm water for 10 to 15 minutes several times a day is often recommended for hypertension sufferers, which as it will obviously help you to relax as well as reducing any swelling in your lower limbs caused by hypertension makes a good deal of sense.

- Mix equal amounts of onion juice and pure honey and take 2 tablespoons daily to combat hypertension. Make a batch that is enough for two or three days at a time and store in an airtight container which you should store in the fridge.

Conclusion

As you will clearly understand by now, hypertension is not called the 'silent killer' for nothing. There are millions of people all over the western world who have hypertension that they are not aware of, and the many of the poor unfortunate people, hypertension could well be a significant factor in a totally unnecessary and tragically early death.

If you have not and your blood pressure checked in the recent past, I would therefore recommend that one of the first things you should do is visit your doctor to get your blood pressure checked. Alternatively, you could invest in a blood pressure [monitoring device](#) that you can use at home, which has the significant advantage that several people can use the device and you can check your blood pressure on a regular basis as well.

The fact is that you cannot afford to be ignorant of whether you have high blood pressure or not, and if you discover that you do have hypertension, you cannot afford to ignore it either. As suggested, one of the major causes of hypertension is the growing tidal wave of people who are overweight or obese, and if you fall into this category and suffer high blood pressure, you have to do something about your weight problem.

Unlike some medical problems, high blood pressure is not something that is good in go away of its own volition. You need to isolate the cause of your hypertension and then deal with it as quickly and as efficiently as possible.

However, as always, it makes a great deal of sense to consider dealing with the problem as naturally as possible before turning to potentially harmful chemical-based pharmaceutical drugs. Whilst some of these drugs are undeniably likely to be effective, they also have the ability of causing as many problems as they solve, so the natural route has to be the sensible first option.

No-one lives with uncontrolled hypertension for very long, so unless coming to a grisly and thoroughly unnecessary early end, you need to check your blood pressure and then if you have hypertension, you've got to start doing something about it sooner rather than later.

There is no time better than the present, and you know what needs to be done, so now is the time to start taking action.

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monthly newsletter 'Natural Alternatives' to
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