

High cholesterol and high blood pressure?

Here's help!

If you have high cholesterol and high blood pressure (hypertension), first, take heed: Left uncontrolled, the combo can damage your heart and blood vessels even quicker than having either condition alone. Then, take heart: Studies show both are very manageable—and with the right treatment plan, you may even reverse any damage. To get started, check out these heart-protective strategies.



1 Eat like a Greek!

Studies show eating a diet made up mostly of healthy fats and plant-based foods can not only lower cholesterol but also reduce blood pressure in those with already high levels. Fiber, in particular, binds to cholesterol and carries it out of the body. In fact, eating just five to 10 grams of soluble fiber every day has been shown to reduce total and LDL (bad) cholesterol by five to 11 points, according to the National Lipid Association. For their part, healthy fats (i.e., omega-3 fatty acids) help improve the elasticity of arteries so blood can flow more easily, which also limits cholesterol buildup. A meta-analysis published in *American Journal of Hypertension* found that omega-3 fatty acids reduced blood pressure as effectively as exercise and limiting salt intake.

What you can do: Stock up on lean proteins (skinless chicken and turkey) and high-fiber foods (oatmeal, beans, veggies and plenty of fresh fruit with the skins intact). Get omega-3s through sources like olive oil, fatty fish like salmon (enjoy two to three times a week) and nuts (a small handful three to four times a week). Limit red meat, sodium, sugary desserts and saturated fats.



2 Stub out cigarettes.

Need another reason to quit? Nicotine narrows blood vessels, increasing your risk for high blood pressure and making it easier for cholesterol to build up. Lighting up is also associated with lower HDL (good) cholesterol.

What you can do: If you're having trouble quitting, ask your doctor about ways you can stop, such as talk therapy or nicotine-replacement options like gum, patches or medication. Research shows cravings come and go within three to five minutes—and reduce in intensity over time. So when one hits, try distracting yourself by drinking water, listening to music, chewing sugar-free gum or talking to a friend for a few minutes.

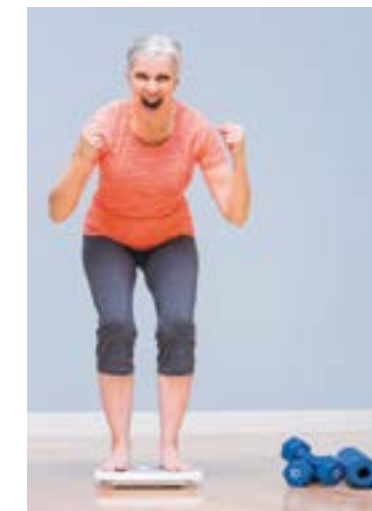


3 Partner with your care team.

If you have hypertension and high cholesterol, your doctor may recom-

mend you take medication to reduce both, make lifestyle tweaks and get your numbers checked more often.

What you can do: Create an action plan with your doctor that addresses diet, exercise and stress. Take all medications as prescribed, and let your doctor know everything you are currently taking as some medicines can raise blood pressure. If you are asked to monitor your blood pressure at home, use a phone app or notebook to record your numbers and take it with you to your next appointment.

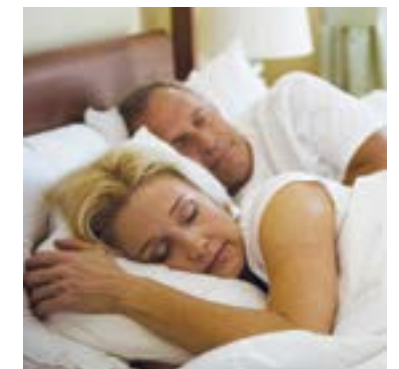


4 Shed excess pounds.

Studies show losing just five to 10 pounds can help lower blood pressure and cholesterol levels. A combination of setting realistic weight-loss goals, increasing physical activity, reducing how much you eat and choosing heart-healthy foods over high fat and sugary dishes can help.

What you can do: Portion

out meals to avoid overeating using measuring cups and a food tracker app and choose whole foods whenever possible, limiting salt and saturated fats.



5 Get sound sleep.

Not only is poor-quality sleep linked with obesity and high blood pressure, but it may also lower good cholesterol while raising bad cholesterol! Not surprising, as a study in the journal *Sleep* found that not getting enough zzzs promotes cravings for high cholesterol foods, boosts stress levels and leads to less exercise. What's more, it can interfere with your body's ability to regulate hormones linked with appetite and the nervous system.

What you can do: Keep your bedroom dark, cool and quiet and go to bed and wake up at the same time every day, including weekends. You can also practice relaxation techniques to soothe any lingering stress that may be keeping you up. If you snore or feel tired even after a full night's sleep, get checked for sleep apnea, which has been linked with a higher risk of heart disease. 