



## Natural Ways to Lower your Blood Pressure

Is your blood pressure high? Join the crowd. An estimated one in four Americans has high blood pressure.

Talk to your physician about your options and try these good-for-pressure strategies:

1. **Power walk:** People who take regular walks can lower the top number by almost 8 points, and the lower number by 6 points. Walk vigorously for at least 30 minutes most days.
2. **Tea it up:** Sipping three cups of hibiscus tea daily has shown results on par with medication management.
3. **Switch to Light:** Light drinking, for women—one-quarter to one-half of an alcoholic beverage per day—may reduce blood pressure more than not drinking at all.
4. **Go to the dark side:** Dark chocolates contain flavanols that make blood vessels more elastic.
5. **Catch your breath:** Regular slow, deep breathing and meditative practices help lower levels of stress hormones.
6. **Shake the salt:** Go easy on the shaker and limit salt-laden processed foods.
7. **Pick up the potassium:** This mineral blunts the effects of sodium, helping to control blood pressure.
8. **Jump for soy:** Replacing some of the refined carbs in your diet with foods high in soy or milk protein, such as low-fat dairy, can bring down systolic blood pressure.



### 7 Things to Do with Dental Floss

Good oral health was the reason that dental floss was invented, but you can use the unflavored floss in many more ways...

- **Fix eyeglasses:** If you lose one of the tiny screws, thread the floss through the hole and tie it for a quick fix.
- **Sew a button:** Use floss if you have no thread.
- **Relieve the sound of a drip:** Hang floss from the faucet so the water runs down the floss into the drain.
- **Cut cake:** Dental floss cuts cheesecake better than most knives, also works with soft cheese, hard-boiled eggs and canned cranberry.
- **Clean:** Use it to get into crevices around the stove, sink, etc.
- **Tie things:** It works great in the place of string for a quick fix.
- **String a roast:** Instead of kitchen twine, works great!



**Health Insurance just became more affordable for** some people with pre-existing conditions. The Department of Health and Human Services slashed premiums for its Pre-Existing Condition Insurance Plan by up to 40% in many states, effective July 1. This plan is available only to US citizens and legal residents who have been without insurance for at least six months. For more information go to [www.pclp.gov](http://www.pclp.gov).

There are a lot of people *taking drugs* to *treat the side effects of drugs*.....

## How to Avoid Drug Reactions

It's not always easy to tell whether a symptom is related to a drug, a drug interaction, the underlying medical condition or a different health problem entirely. Here are some tips to help avoid drug reactions:

- ◇ If you experience a change that doesn't feel right, tell your doctor.
- ◇ If you're taking several drugs, ask your doctor or pharmacist to review them. Include over-the-counter medications and supplements.
- ◇ Ask if there are any lifestyle changes you can make instead of taking a drug.
- ◇ Ask to be prescribed drugs that have been on the market for at least seven

years. It often takes five to 10 years for serious side effects of a new drug to show up in the general population.

- ◇ Ask why the doctor is prescribing a particular drug. Find out what the risks and benefits are, compared to alternative drugs.
- ◇ Don't stop taking a drug without consulting your doctor. Suddenly stopping some drugs can be harmful.
- ◇ Review your medications online. Use AARP's Drug Interaction Checker at [aarp.org/healthtools](http://aarp.org/healthtools).

Be your own advocate. Patients know themselves better than anyone else.



## Good Communication

Good communication between doctors and patients improves health outcomes, patient satisfaction and a patient's motivation to change unhealthy behaviors. Best ways to improve communication with your doctor: Come to medical appointments prepared with questions, and be willing to share any concerns.

Bring a family member for support or if you are worried that you will not be understood or won't remember what is said. Ask the doctor to use simple, clear language if you can't understand the medical terminology.

Take notes, and feel free to ask for written information. Ask how quickly you are expected to recover from an illness or injury, and ask about possible side effects from medical treatments.

*Good Communication can improve health outcomes.*



In general, one cup of fruit or 100% fruit juice, or a half-cup of dried fruit can be considered as one cup toward your daily

recommended amount.

Also count as one cup:

1/2 large or 1 small apple

## What Counts as a cup of fruit?

- 1 large banana
- 1 medium grapefruit
- 1 large orange
- 1 large peach
- 1 medium pear
- 3 medium or 2 large plums
- approx. 8 large strawberries

1 small wedge of watermelon

Federal guidelines recommend two cups, or the equivalent, daily.