

Hypertension: How to Silence the “Silent Killer”

By Simon Yu, MD

Hypertension is one of the common medical disorders I see in my practice and in America. Hypertension is the leading cause of cardiovascular problems later in life. It is often called the “Silent Killer.” Actually, hypertension is not a medical disease but is a physical finding indicating elevated blood pressure from the ideal value.

Over 60 million Americans and more than half of the population over age 60 have hypertension. With a large population base, management of hypertension with medications is very lucrative for the Pharmaceutical industry. This industry creates aggressive but subtle overt and covert manipulation of the public through various forms of advertisements. They also intensely market to health professionals and heavily influence the education process in medical schools.

Over 95 per cent of hypertension is called “Essential” or “Idiopathic” hypertension. This means the cause of the hypertension is unknown. Definition and classification of hypertension varies between mild, moderate, and severe.

As a general rule, blood pressure over 140/90 is considered high. At this level, some form of medical intervention is recommended. The intervention can include dietary changes, sodium restriction, stop smoking, exercise, weight loss, stress control, and medications such as diuretics, beta blockers, calcium channel blockers, and ACE inhibitors, among others.

As a physician, I know from first hand experience that most patients do not follow the most basic recommendations like weight loss, dietary modifications and exercise. They seem willing to take hypertensive medications out of fear of the possibility of a stroke. This fear has been well implanted into the public psyche. But are there other options instead of medications? Yes, there are many options that could be less costly and safer than blood pressure medications.

Let’s start with food. Eat whole food, low in carbohydrates, and consume at least 30%-50% of calories in raw form such as vegetables, nuts, eggs, meats and moderate amounts of fruits. High carbohydrate grain diets and diets that cause a high insulin level (the twin evils) are invitations for weight gain and hypertension.

I like the Zone diet by Barry Sears, Ph.D. (On my web site look at the “Peak Performance Diet” under “Articles.”) Also, take digestive enzymes with meals. Adding organic apple cider vinegar to your diet is excellent for digestion. It is critical that you understand that *poor digestion of the stomach is the foundation for the beginning of all chronic illness.*

Get ready to take a mouth full of vitamins and minerals. The farm soil in the U.S. has been depleted of essential minerals by industrialized agricultural practices over the last century. Therefore, it is unfortunately essential that everyone needs to take extra nutrients “from A to Z” for two reasons.

First, you need to **support your body’s daily vitamin and mineral needs that aren’t provided by the nutritionally depleted food supply.** Second, you need to detoxify from all the pollutants in the food, air, and water. These pollutants include the “-icides”, pesticides, fungicides, herbicides, other synthetic chemicals, and heavy metals such as mercury which is common in air (from power plant pollution), soil, and fish.

Here is a simplified list of recommended nutrients but an interesting way to remember these: A for vitamin A , B for B-complex, C for vitamin C, D for vitamin D, E for Vitamin E complex, F for fish oils or Cod liver oil, G for garlic, H for hawthorn, I for iodine, J for juicing with vegetables and fruits like celery and watermelon, K for vitamin K, L for Lipoic acids, M for magnesium, N for nuts, O for oxygenations thru breathing exercise, P for potassium from vegetables, S for sweat , T for taurine, V for low salt V-8 juice, W for water, and Z for Zinc. Others include coenzyme Q-10, L-arginine, Nattokinase, and L-Carnitine.

The list above is not complete but provides a quick overview of nutrients that might be beneficial for your overall health including hypertension. How much to take of each nutrient may vary seasonally and should be based on each individual. Hair mineral analysis and a blood test are good starting points for designing an individualized nutrition program. As an example, during the winter season, people may need additional vitamin D in a range of 3,000 to 6,000 U per day.

Most of the mild to moderate hypertension does not require medications and can be managed with life style modifications and nutritional support (JAMA, May 2003). The average person taking blood pressure medications for 30 years may gain additional weeks of life at a cost of thousands of dollars on multiple medications per year vs. the patient taking no medication. Severe hypertensive patients should be treated with medications and nutritional support together.

What about that darn hypertension that does not respond to nutrients or medications? Look for secondary hypertension. One person came to me with severe hypertension while on multiple medications. We discovered she had a brain tumor. Other causes for lack of success with medications may be kidney problems, pheochromocytoma (an adrenal tumor that produces hypertension), intracranial aneurysm, or drug induced hypertension.

Other unsuspected causes of hypertension include unrecognized chronic infections and inflammations from dental problems, parasites, allergies, cranial and spinal mis-alignments, and autonomic nervous system dysfunction. The Heart Rate Variability test is a quick electrophysiology study to determine hidden distress of the autonomic nervous system.

Hypertension is a common physical finding as we grow older. It usually responds to nutritional and dietary modifications. Don't be fearful of it. Do an Internet search for side effects from medications. They could have serious and long term impact on your health. Don't jump into taking medications, investigate options. Let's silence the "Silent Killer" with nutritional support.

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