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### AIM for Health

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# High Blood Pressure

## Guarding against the silent killer...

By Dr. Mohammad Shegeft

High blood pressure, or hypertension, doesn't usually have obvious symptoms and many people have hypertension without knowing.

Commonly referred to as the "silent killer", untreated high blood pressure can lead to serious diseases, including stroke, heart disease, kidney disease, vascular conditions and eye disease.

The best way to know if you have high blood pressure is to have your blood pressure measured routinely at each doctor's visit, and once every three months outside of a clinic setting when you are more relaxed. In many cases, people with high blood pressure do not have any symptoms until it is in its advanced stage. However, if you have any of the following symptoms, contact your doctor and make sure you discuss the status of your blood pressure and your cardiovascular health.

Some of common symptoms that most people correlate with high blood pressure are chest pain, heart palpitations, ankle swelling and shortness of breath. However most people don't think of the next few symptoms as signs of high blood pressure: frequent nose bleeds, headaches, blurred or double vision and blood with urination.

Blood pressure is typically recorded as two numbers, written as a ratio; systolic (top number) and diastolic (bottom

number). An optimal range for an adult is 100-120 systolic over 60-80 diastolic. Anything over 120 systolic and 80 diastolic is considered prehypertension and anything over 140 systolic and 90 diastolic is considered high blood pressure (hypertension).

### Breathing to reduce blood pressure

By Nichole Santoro, LAc

Proper breathing goes by many names. You may have heard it called diaphragmatic breathing, abdominal breathing, or belly breathing. When you breathe deeply and fill the lungs fully you will notice that your belly rises as the diaphragm descends.

Reawakening the skill of deep breathing allows you to tap into one of your body's strongest self-healing mechanisms. It encourages full oxygen exchange and not surprisingly, this type of breathing slows the heartbeat and can lower or stabilize blood pressure.

### Here's how to take a deep, healing, diaphragmatic breath:

Find a comfortable, quiet place to sit or lie down. Start by observing your breath, without judgment, and just notice its quality and where it moves in your body. When we are hurried or stressed, the breath is often choppy, quick and only enters the top part of the lungs. After a minute or two of

concentrating on your breath, you will be able to deepen your breath by gently allowing more air to enter. Start by consciously poofing the belly out on the inhale as a way to draw the air into the bottom of the lungs first. It can be helpful to place your hand on the abdomen to help you get the feel of the belly rising. As you slowly sip in the air, imagine your lungs filling with oxygen from the bottom up to the top. Exhale normally, only focusing on the inhales at first.

After several rounds of practicing the "belly breath" you can further your breath work by starting to count the length of your inhales and exhales. For a more awake and focused state of mind you want to match the length of your inhale and exhale. It is usually a 4 to 6 count for most people. If your goal is to really calm the mind and the body, make the length of the exhale longer by 2-4 seconds. After just 5 minutes of focused attention on your breath, the blood pressure will decrease and stabilize. Open your eyes and enjoy a calmer yet more alert state of mind and body.

The art of breath work has been developed by many different cultures and can include a wide variety of exercises involving the breath, the mind and movement. Pranayama in Yogic traditions and Qigong in Chinese Medicine are two popular avenues for deepening your breath practice. You can open a whole inner world of power and transformation by tuning into this essential tool for health!

## ***Detoxification and Hypertension—cleansing to reduce blood pressure***

*By Dr. Alison Kerns*

### ***What is detoxification?***

Detoxification is a metabolic process by which the toxic qualities of a poison or toxin are reduced by the body. However, depuration is the process of helping the body to remove these unwanted materials that are incompatible with health. Depuration as a term is not commonly used in popular culture (as detoxification has been incorrectly embraced) but it actually means to “cleanse, or purify” by promoting the elimination of waste products from the body. Detoxification, or reducing the toxic nature of a toxin, is only one part of depuration, which allows for the *removal* of specific unwanted toxins. Therefore, it is imperative to incorporate a depuration program that includes detoxification!

In naturopathic medicine, the basis for promoting depuration is to support an individual’s emunctories. An emunctory is an organ or part of the body that gives off waste products thus having an “excretory function”. The main emunctories that are supported are the liver, gallbladder, plasma, kidneys, GI tract, skin, lungs, neurological system, and the mental/emotional body. Once the individual’s emunctories have been supported and are functioning properly, then they are ready for a deeper detoxification protocol.

### ***How does depuration and detoxification correlate to hypertension?***

Hypertension is a disorder characterized by a pathological increase in blood pressure. Prevention is the best medicine for hypertension! There are many lifestyle factors that can significantly increase the risk for developing hypertension. These factors include

obesity, smoking, diabetes, excessive sodium intake, poor intake of fruits and vegetables, a sedentary lifestyle, and alcohol. Thus, in order to prevent hypertension, or to treat it once it has developed, it is imperative to maintain an ideal body weight, to get regular exercise, limit or avoid alcoholic beverages, implement dietary changes including the addition of quality proteins, ample fruits and vegetables, and dietary fiber while limiting sodium intake and saturated fat, and quit smoking.

When embarking on a depuration and detoxification program with your doctor, you are incorporating many of these preventative tactics into your daily life. Thus you are significantly reducing your risk for developing hypertension while also implementing many lifestyle treatment options. Through the process of depuration and detoxification, you are reducing your toxic load and creating a healthy lifestyle that can be maintained after your program is done. Through participating in this program, you have increased your emunctories’ functioning abilities and created the foundation for a vibrant self, free from many chronic disorders, including hypertension! Talk to your naturopathic doctor about implementing a detoxification and depuration program that is right for you.

## ***The Hype about Hypertension— Breaking Down the Factor of Obesity***

*By Dr. Brooke Azie-Rentz*

High blood pressure is defined as a reading above 140/90 for 3 separate measurements. We all know that age, race and family history contribute to this diagnosis, but what habits and lifestyle choices do we make that may also contribute to this potential killer?

*Obesity, or just being over-weight*, has long been cited as a common risk factor due to more blood needed to circulate through a larger body, however, I would say the habits and lifestyle choices that we make that lead to obesity also directly contribute, and are the important aspect of obesity on which to focus. This would include food choices such as fast food and processed food that are high in salt (sodium), which causes our bodies to retain water therefore increasing blood volume; and diets low in vitamins and minerals such as potassium, which helps balance/control the amount of sodium your body absorbs. In addition, these lifestyle choices coincide with a decreased intake in fresh fruits and vegetables which leads to less consumption of vitamins, minerals and fiber and an increased consumption of saturated fats.

The bottom line is that, to a degree, you are in control of your blood pressure because you control what you eat and what you allow your family to eat. I suggest setting everyone up for success through proper food choices.



***AIM is offering incredible personalized detox packages this summer. Call now to inquire or book yours today!***