

UNDER PRESSURE

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HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE NEWS YOU CAN USE



Improving Control of Your High Blood Pressure – Step Three



In the January and February issues of *Under Pressure*, we described how physical activity and healthy food choices can keep your blood pressure in check. These lifestyle changes can be hard to commit to, but we hope it's becoming easier each day.

This month, we introduce Step Three in the four-part plan to control your blood pressure – decreasing alcohol use and cutting out tobacco. These, too, are difficult changes to make, but you can do it!

The following are heart-healthy reasons to put that cigarette down for good and reduce your alcohol use:

Smoking

- When you have high blood pressure, your risk for heart disease is already high. Smoking adds to that risk.
- Smoking reduces blood circulation by narrowing your blood vessels, putting you at risk for developing a blockage of the large arteries in the arms and legs (peripheral vascular disease) that can cause a range of problems, from pain to gangrene to amputation.
- Women who smoke increase their risk of breaking a hip.
- Smoking harms nearly every organ in the body and causes a number of diseases and cancers.
(See article on page 2, *Tai Chi Helps Fight the Urge to Smoke.*)

Drinking

- The more heavily you drink, the more difficult it is to control your blood pressure. That's because alcohol pushes nutrient-rich blood away from your heart.
- Alcohol is high in calories and contributes to weight gain.
- Alcohol interferes with the way some blood pressure medicines work and increases the side effects of some medicines.

When you decrease your drinking, you can lower your top blood pressure number (systolic blood pressure) two to four points and your bottom blood pressure number (diastolic blood pressure) one to two points.

Moderate drinking is recommended and represents two drinks a day for men younger than age 65, one drink a day for men age 65 and older, and one drink a day for women of any age. A drink is 12 ounces of beer, five ounces of wine or 1½ ounces of 80 proof distilled spirits.

Questions for Your Health Care Team

- What resources are available to help me stop using tobacco?
- Can I drink moderately with high blood pressure?

Recipes for Heart Health: Creamy Apricot Oatmeal

3 ½ cups of water
½ cup of chopped dried apricots

2 cups uncooked quick-cooking rolled oats
1 six-ounce container fat-free vanilla yogurt



In a medium saucepan, bring the water and apricots to a boil, covered, over medium-high heat, and cook for five to six minutes. Reduce the heat to low and cook for five minutes.

Stir in the oats. Cook, uncovered, for one to two minutes, or until thickened, stirring occasionally.

Spoon into bowls and add a dollop of yogurt to each serving. Using the tip of a butter knife, swirl the yogurt through the oatmeal. Serves 4; 1 cup per serving.

Tip: Kitchen shears make it easy to snip the dried apricots into small pieces. To prevent apricots and other dried fruits from sticking to the blades of the shears, run them under hot water and dry them just before you snip the fruit. You can also lightly spray the blades with cooking spray.

Nutritional information: Calories per serving: 233; Total Fat: 2.5g; Saturated Fat: .5g; Polyunsaturated Fat: 1g; Monounsaturated Fat: 1g; Cholesterol: 1mg; Sodium: 39mg; Carbohydrates: 45g; Fiber: 6g; Sugar: 17g; Protein: 9g

Tai Chi Helps Fight the Urge to Smoke



You may have a lot of pent-up energy while trying to quit smoking. Consider taking karate or Tai Chi. Tai Chi is a low-impact, weight-bearing aerobic exercise that involves slow, gentle movements, deep breathing and meditation. Some people believe that Tai Chi improves the flow of energy through the body, leading to wellness and a number of benefits, including:

- Improved strength, coordination and flexibility
- Better balance
- Reduced pain and stiffness
- Enhanced sleep

Don't be intimidated by martial arts. Many centers offer adult classes and a free trial class. Visit the Family Kung Fu Centers in Millbury and Auburn, MA:

322 Millbury Avenue
Millbury, MA 01527
508-752-3534

567 Southbridge Street, Unit 14
Auburn, MA 01501
508-832-0888

<http://www.familykungfucenters.com>

If Tai Chi isn't for you, try another sport that keeps you busy and your mind off smoking. Visit the American Cancer Society for ideas at <http://www.cancer.org/Healthy/index>.

Web Sources for Hypertension Information

■ National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute
www.nhlbi.nih.gov/hbp/

■ MedlinePlus, US National Library of Medicine
www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/highbloodpressure.html

■ American Heart Association
www.americanheart.org

■ American Society of Hypertension
www.ash-us.org/patient_edu/bp_booklet.html

For information about our partner,
the Heart and Vascular Center of Excellence,
please visit www.umassmemorial.org/heart

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