

# NATURAL METHODS



## For Managing High BLOOD PRESSURE

There is a large body of growing research supporting the use of natural therapies for the management of high blood pressure, or hypertension. A Naturopathic Doctor (ND) can be a great tool in helping you do this. Before we get into these natural methods, let's go over some facts!

Did you know that high blood pressure is the leading risk for death in first world nations? Elevated systolic blood pressure is defined as  $>115\text{mmHg}^1$ . The second and third factors are tobacco and high cholesterol, along with physical inactivity, alcohol and a high BMI. Hypertension, if uncontrolled, can lead to permanent end-organ damage such as kidney, eye, lung and heart disease - therefore it is an important parameter to monitor. Stage 1 hypertension is defined as 140-150 mmHg (Systolic), and 90-99 mmHg (Diastolic), moving up to  $>160$  mmHg systolic BP for Stage 2 hypertension and  $> 100$  mmHg Diastolic<sup>2</sup>.

Let's back track a bit though. Let's say at your ND or MD's office you were given a reading of 140mmHg/90mmHg. This does not mean you have Hypertension as there are many other factors that could change your reading on a daily basis – caffeine, activity level, “white coat” hypertension (being nervous at an appointment), medications and more. Hypertension is diagnosed once you have a high enough reading on 2 or more separate occasions. With this being said, if your blood pressure is  $>210$  mmHg systolic or  $>120$  mmHg diastolic then these are hypertensive urgency occasions and become emergent<sup>2</sup> (seek immediate medical attention).

If you are anywhere from the pre-hypertensive stage (120-139 mmHg systolic/ 80-89 mmHg diastolic) to stage 2 hypertensive, **there are many natural and adjunctive interventions that you can use to help manage and lower your blood pressure.** You can even possibly do this without commonly prescribed pharmaceutical medication or alongside it. Working with an ND can help you do this. Now why would you want to do this? Well, according to a study in a medical journal, a 5mmHg or 5 point reduction in systolic blood pressure was found to reduce death from stroke by 14%, mortality from coronary heart disease by 9%, and all cause mortality by 7%<sup>3</sup>. There are many natural agents such as supplements, diets,



acupuncture and even yoga (yes I said yoga) that can, on their own, reduce blood pressure (BP) by 5 points and TOGETHER, reduce it even more. Anyone that is currently hypertensive, a goal BP in order to obtain a clear reduction in cardiovascular disease is <140/90mmHg. In those individuals with diabetes or kidney disease, your goal would be <130/80 mmHg.

Now, let's go over the more interesting and fun naturopathic interventions that have shown to be helpful for hypertension:

### 1) Diet & Lifestyle

- A large trial found that there are statistically significant reductions in BP from lifestyle interventions, specifically with diet<sup>4</sup>. This may be the most difficult intervention to achieve but also the most powerful.
- **Exercise:** >4 days/week of 30 min/day can reduce BP by 4-9mmHg (remember the statistic mentioned before by a 5 point reduction)<sup>4</sup>
- **Weight loss alone:** reduces by 2 mmHg
- **Diets:**
  - o **DASH diet** (widely prescribed for hypertension) - Leads to an 11 point reduction in those who currently have high blood pressure and a 3 point reduction in those who fall within normal<sup>5</sup>
  - o **Mediterranean diet** - Many studies, looking at cardiovascular disease overall, showed modest reduction in high blood pressure but not as much as the DASH diet

**Overall, a DASH-like diet, along with weight reduction, reduced blood pressure by a whopping 16 points!**<sup>6</sup>

### 2) Specific Foods & Vitamins

- **MUFA** (Olive oil) - lowers BP by 8 points
- **Sodium**
  - o Most sodium comes from processed foods and restaurants. By eating a whole foods diet, this excessive sodium intake can be greatly limited

- o By reducing your daily sodium intake from 3500mg to 1700mg/day, you can drop your BP by 5 points and reduce the risk of developing CVD by 13% - **also leading to a 1.3 billion dollar reduction in health care costs!**<sup>7</sup>

### • Alcohol

- o Reducing alcohol to a low-risk alcohol consumption level (0-2 standard drinks/day) was found to have a significant reduction in both systolic and diastolic blood pressures (3 mmHg and 2 mmHg respectively)

### • Garlic

- o A study found that either taking garlic capsules or the equivalent of 2-5 cloves of garlic/day reduced systolic blood pressure by 16 mmHg and diastolic by 9 mmHg<sup>8</sup>

- Other foods/nutrients that you should consume in combination to reduce blood pressure (a reduction of about 3 points each):

- o Chocolate
- o Magnesium (dietary sources are leafy greens, nuts, seeds, avocado and chocolate)
- o Fish oils and fish products
- o Pomegranate juice

### 3) Mind-body techniques

#### • Acupuncture, Exercise, Breathing

- o A study found that **acupuncture, combined with breathing and exercise, reduced systolic blood pressure by 15 points!**<sup>9</sup> This is excellent information considering that deep breathing, exercise and acupuncture are very cost-effective means for treatment

- **Qi Gong** - shown to be helpful in mild hypertension in older adults (11 point reduction in 4-16 weeks)

- **Meditation** - reduces blood pressure by 6 points over 15 weeks

There are many other herbs and botanicals that can also be helpful in reducing hypertension as part of a comprehensive treatment plan.

Overall, a combination of a DASH-like diet, exercise, stress-reduction/mind body therapies and select nutrients and supplements are helpful as either a sole or adjunctive treatment for hypertension.

I want you to know that it is possible to manage high blood pressure from a natural and holistic perspective that will give you long-term results. I'd love to help you manage your heart-related concerns today! Call 519-821-1999 or email [clinic@healingfoundations.ca](mailto:clinic@healingfoundations.ca) for your initial consult.

Want to meet the doctor in person beforehand? Book a Complementary 15 minute Meet & Greet to go over your health goals with Dr. Kaitlyn Zorn, ND by the contact information above.

## Kaitlyn Zorn, ND



### References

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