The Silent Killer aka Hypertension

Over time hypertension (fancy term for high blood pressure) can cause damage to your blood vessels and internal organs, such as the heart and kidneys. Hypertension does this while causing no noticeable ill-effects, often until it is too late. One in 3 adults has high blood pressure. Hypertension is caused by high blood pressure. According to the American Heart Association, high blood pressure is diagnosed at 140/90 mmHg. Optimum range for blood pressure is less than 120/80 mmHg.

Although blood pressure is affected by age and ethnicity, people with diabetes and individuals who are overweight are also at an increased risk. Stressful situations, such as exams, school work, and jobs can also affect blood pressure. Routine check-ups for blood pressure and routine visits to the doctor can have a huge impact on prevention and protection. Knowing your blood pressure, maintaining a healthy weight, and participating in regular exercise can help the severity of damage high blood pressure can cause.

Consumption of the following foods can positively impact your blood pressure and have an overall positive effect on your health.

- Oatmeal Fabulous Fiber
  - This hearty breakfast staple is a good source of beta glucan, a form of soluble fiber that's been shown to help regulate blood sugar levels and carry excess cholesterol out of the body.
  - To get this benefit, you need 3 grams of soluble fiber per day (about 1½ cups of cooked oatmeal) as part of a diet low in saturated fat and cholesterol. How can you get this into your daily meals? In addition to enjoying oatmeal for breakfast topped with fruit and nuts, you can bake up a batch of oatmeal bars or muffins or add it as a binder to turkey meatloaf.

- Spinach
  - Spinach is rich in potassium, which may help lower blood pressure levels. Veggies and greens, such as spinach, are also low in calories and a good source of fiber,
which provides bulk that fills you up faster. This makes it an important ally in the war against excess weight which ups your chances of heart disease.

- Spinach is delicious in salads, as a sauté, in eggs and in soups. But don't rely on it exclusively — plant foods work synergistically to keep us healthy, so be sure to eat a variety of fruits, vegetables and greens.

- **Salmon**
  - Fatty fish, including salmon, are a great source of omega-3 fatty acids. Omega-3s have been shown to help lower triglyceride levels, reduce the risk of blood clots, reduce the overall risk for heart attacks, and lower blood pressure levels. Omega-3s also reduce inflammation, which plays a major role in diseases including heart disease.
  - Try to eat 8 ounces of salmon per week. Not a fan? You can get the same effect from mackerel, fresh albacore tuna, Atlantic herring, sardines and lake trout.

- **Walnuts**
  - Walnuts are a good source of polyunsaturated fat — the kind that's been shown to reduce blood cholesterol levels and lower the production of LDL cholesterol in the body. They're also a vegetarian source of omega-3s, making them a boon for people who don't eat fish.
  - Be careful, though — nuts are high in calories, which can cause you to pack on pounds if you down too much. A serving of walnuts is 14 halves — roughly the amount held in a smaller palm. Try them in oatmeal, as a topping for chicken or fish, on salads, in muffins and on sautéed kale.

- **Whole-grain breads, cereals and pasta, brown rice, barley**
  - When eaten regularly as part of a diet low in saturated and trans fat, soluble fiber has been associated with increased diet quality and decreased risk of cardiovascular disease.
  - Soluble fiber modestly reduces LDL (“bad”) cholesterol beyond levels achieved by a diet low in saturated and trans fats alone. Whole-grain breads, cereals and pasta, brown rice, barley

Resources:


Beet 'Kissed' Rice
Servings: 6

- 1 cup brown rice
- 2 cups water
- 2 teaspoons olive oil
- 4 medium red beets (about 1 pound), without greens, peeled and cut into 1/2-inch cubes
- 1 small onions, finely chopped
- 1 tablespoon minced garlic
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley, divided –see recipe
- 1 lemon, juiced
- salt and pepper to taste

Directions

1. Bring 2 cups water to a boil in a small pot. Stir in rice, and 1/2 teaspoon salt; cover. Reduce heat to low; simmer 30 minutes or until soft. Remove from heat; let stand, covered.

2. Reduce heat to medium-low; add onions and garlic to skillet. Cook, stirring occasionally, until onions are translucent, about 8 minutes. Add beets and 1 teaspoon salt; season
with pepper. Cover; cook, stirring occasionally, until beets are tender, about 25 minutes (if beets stick to skillet, add up to 1/4 cup water).

3. Stir rice, lemon juice and parsley into beet mixture. Transfer to a platter. Garnish with parsley if desired. Serve warm or at room temperature.

Strawberry Vinaigrette Salad
Servings: 6

- 1/2 cup olive oil
- 1/3 cup raspberry vinegar (or other fruit vinegar)
- 1/4 cup honey
- 1 teaspoon pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 3 cups sliced fresh strawberries, divided
- 1/2 cup walnut halves, divided
- 8 cups mixed salad greens or fresh spinach
- Goat cheese, crumbled

Directions

1. In a blender, combine the first five ingredients; cover and process for 30 seconds. Add 2 cups strawberries; cover and process until blended.
2. In a large bowl, combine the spinach, walnuts, and remaining strawberries. Drizzle with vinaigrette and top with goat cheese.
Chicken 'Hugged' Asparagus
Serving size: 2 tenders

- 2 chicken tenders, pounded flat (if tenders are not available, cut breasts in strips)
- 6 asparagus stalks, trimmed
- 1/2 tablespoons olive oil
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1/8 lemon- cut wedge

Directions

1. Pound chicken tenders to an even flat-sized piece and set aside. Trim the root end of the asparagus. Season tenders and asparagus with a small amount of salt and pepper.
2. Take 4 asparagus and lay them in the middle part of the tender, forming a x like shape. Roll and wrap and hold in place with toothpicks.
3. Add oil to a non-stick skillet and heat on low to medium heat on the stove.
4. Add tenders to a pan and cover with a lid and heat for 5 minutes. Flip the tenders and cook on other side for 5 additional minutes. Continue cooking tenders rotating as necessary until tenders are fully cooked (about an additional 10 minutes) (temp reaches 165F).
5. Squeeze lemon juice on chicken before serving.