



HEALTH CAPSULE | No.65 | 2019

MAY: HYPERTENSION AWARENESS MONTH

Hypertension is the leading modifiable risk factor for cardiovascular disease and is the leading risk factor for death worldwide. New research shows that nearly one-quarter of Canadian men (24%) and women (23%) have hypertension, and that 84% of people with hypertension are aware of it. Furthermore, being overweight or obese, being physically inactive, or having a diet low in fruits and vegetables significantly increases the risk of developing hypertension.

Some foods that are good for your heart and your blood pressure

Berries: Flavonoid-rich berries especially, blueberries, raspberries and strawberries, have abundant minerals like potassium and anthocyanin that have been found to exhibit anti-inflammatory effects on the arterial walls.

Radish: Radish leaves are famed for their antihypertensive properties because they contain ethyl acetate which controls blood pressure.

Beetroot: Nitrate and potassium in beetroot can help control your blood pressure levels.

Garlic: Garlic extracts have been found to relax the muscles of the arteries. This helps reduce both the diastolic as well as the systolic blood pressure.

Whole grains: In fibre-rich whole grains, the compounds help break down the cholesterol deposited in the arteries and help make the blood pressure normal.

Milk and milk products: These are rich in calcium which can affect blood pressure. Calcium is responsible for normal and smooth muscle contraction that helps blood vessels transport blood efficiently.

Dark chocolate: Dark chocolate has flavanols which can reduce blood pressure. Flavanols help with the formation of nitric oxide that helps keep blood pressure in check. Even though dark chocolate is healthy, you must make sure you do not overindulge. Stick to 1-2 pieces daily.

Indian Gooseberry: Amla has been found to reduce bad cholesterol levels in the blood, is Vitamin C-rich and therefore, can help widen the blood vessels and thus reduce blood pressure.

The 5 best exercises to overcome hypertension

Walking: One of the simplest yet most effective ways to keep your blood pressure in control is going for walks every day. Brisk walking is known to help reduce blood pressure. Make sure to do at least 30 minutes of walking every day.

Running: Running or jogging exerts a positive effect on the heart by lowering cholesterol and also by burning calories. It is also good for increasing the blood circulation in the body.

Swimming: Swimming is one of the best exercises for those with hypertension. Swimming can help reduce the risk of a number of cardiovascular diseases. It can also help you build muscle strength and regulate your breathing.

Weight training: Weight training or strength training is a must for everybody including heart patients. This is known to help expand blood vessels in the heart and hence is highly recommended for heart patients. Do different kinds of strength training exercises every day to see the positive effects.

Planks: One of the easiest, no-equipment exercises is planking. One of the ways in which planking is good for your heart is that it can be great for reducing stress. It not only tones but also relaxes the stiffness in your muscles. Planking can also tone your abdominal muscles and help get rid of abdominal fat. Try different plank variations under a trained fitness expert.

***You must make sure to consult with your doctor and your physical trainer about the best exercises for you.**



SHOULD WE ADAPT OUR FOOD TO THE CHANGE OF SEASON?

The answer is **yes!** Aligning your eating habits according to the period of the year is not only **good for your health and the environment, but also for taste and budget.**

Seasonal vegetables are aptly named. Winter fruits and vegetables are full of carbohydrates to better withstand the cold while in spring we have artichokes or asparagus to stimulate kidney function and eliminate excess. For many nutritionists, **if we adapt our diet to seasonal products, no need for dietary supplements.** Also, for the winter because of the cold, our body claims nutrients and vitamins to stay strong against colds and other diseases that surround us. We then find vegetables and fruits rich in minerals and vitamins. The opposite happens in summer: our body dehydrates quickly and summer season fruits and vegetables are gorged with water.

Each season is associated with different elements and foods that will enhance your health. Not only does **eating according to the calendar strengthen our bodies**, but also, **we're better equipped to digest these foods at this time.** Seasonal foods, they add, may also **help us be more in harmony with nature.** Eating locally and seasonally makes for healthier living. One reason why is that they generally **carry more nutrients than out-of-season supermarket foods.**

After a food is harvested, as each day passes, the levels of many nutrients diminish. To help prevent foods from losing heat- and light-sensitive nutrients during transit, some companies harvest food unripened and then use artificial agents to rapidly mature the food. Some are questioning the safety of these ripening agents, including researchers who put together this review published in Agriculture & Food Security last May. For now, U.S. legislature "recommends the use of ethylene [a hormone naturally occurring in fruit] for post-harvest ripening of tropical fruits and de-greening of citrus." Though the agent is considered non-toxic, further studies are needed to investigate its long-term effects on humans. In the meantime, consider this another reason to favor untouched organic and seasonal produce.

As an added bonus, **eating according to the seasons tastes better and is cheaper, too.** The same thing happens when produce is harvested and then shipped in refrigerated trucks over miles to reach your store. An orange, flavorless tomato in December cannot compare in anyway to a fresh heirloom tomato in the summer.

When it comes to **costs, out-of-season foods are most expensive** because there is the additional expense to store and distribute produce from across the country or the world. Local produce at your grocery store, farmers' market, CSA, or you-pick-it farm or orchard spends less time and fewer miles going from farm to table, making it kinder on your wallet.

Another benefit to seasonal eating is how it helps the planet. According to some estimates, **eating seasonally and locally can reduce the carbon footprint of your food by up to 10 percent.**

So as you can see, although everything is available to us at the grocery store, it's much better to eat what's growing right now around you. When you visit your farmers' market or grocery store, ask what is in season and what is local, purchase those foods, and enjoy the fabulous flavors of the season.

Sources : <https://www.aquatonic.fr/blog/sante/effets-changement-saison>, <https://www.sonima.com/food/health-nutrition/seasonal-eating/>
<https://unpeudemarine.com/2018/06/13/113/>