

HYPERTENSION FACTS

Did you know that some foods might have the power to lower your blood pressure? Exciting new studies have shown that people with hypertension had lower blood pressure after consuming the following foods:

- beets;
- nuts (especially walnuts, almonds, and hazelnuts);
- cocoa and dark chocolate;
- low-fat milk and yogurt;
- flaxseed;
- sesame oil;
- olive oil;
- tea (black, green, and hibiscus);
- garlic; and
- whole grain breakfast cereals.

You don't need to eat all of these foods to receive the effect. Just add more of those you like to your diet. Here are some suggestions for healthful snacks and meals that may help to lower your blood pressure.

- Think you don't like beets? Try stir-frying them with carrots, green pepper, garlic, and a little bit of brown sugar to make a beautiful and satisfying dish.
- Flaxseed has a delicate nutty flavor that goes well with other foods. You can add it to yogurt, cereal, pancakes, and muffins.
- Add chopped walnuts or slivered almonds to oatmeal, salads, and breakfast cereals.
- For a great snack, dip banana slices or chopped nuts into melted dark chocolate and refrigerate until firm. (But don't forget that nuts and chocolate are high in calories.)
- Try a new tea. Hibiscus tea, made from the flowers of the Nigerian hibiscus plant, is a deep red tea with a subtle flavor. Studies have shown that drinking one to two cups per day can lower blood pressure. However, don't drink this tea if you take diuretic medication, since it may cause harmful side effects. Also, because hibiscus tea can flush acetaminophen from the body, be sure to take this medication three to four hours before drinking the tea.

Sesame and Olive Oil Salad Dressing

Make a delicious salad dressing using sesame and olive oil by combining the following ingredients:

- 2 T sesame oil;
- 2 T olive oil;
- 1 T rice wine vinegar;
- 1 T low-sodium soy sauce; and
- 1 tsp honey.

— Mary Franz, MS, RDN, LDN, is a research dietitian at Harvard University and a freelance health and science writer.