
Lifestyle changes can reduce need for BP meds



Among obese men and women with high blood pressure, lifestyle modifications could help reduce their need for antihypertensive medications, according to a study presented at the American Heart Association's Joint Hypertension 2018 Scientific Sessions.

"Lifestyle modifications, including healthier eating and regular exercise, can greatly decrease the number of patients who need blood pressure-lowering medicine. That's particularly the case in folks who have blood pressures in the range of 130 to 160 mmHg systolic and between 80 and 99 mmHg diastolic," said study author Alan Hinderliter, MD, associate professor of medicine at University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill.

The study included 129 overweight or obese men and women between ages 40 and 80 years who had high blood pressure. Each participant was randomly assigned to one of three 16-week interventions:

Group 1 - Patients changed their eating habits to that of the DASH plan (more fruits and vegetables; less red meat, salt and sweets) and took part in a weight management programme that included behavioural counselling and three-times weekly supervised exercise.

Group 2 - Patients changed diet only, focusing on the DASH diet with the help of a nutritionist.

Group 3 - No changes to patients' exercise or eating habits.

Results showed that those eating the DASH diet and participating in the weight management group lost an average 19 pounds and had reduced blood pressure by an average 16 mmHg systolic and 10 mmHg diastolic at the close of the 16 weeks. Those following only the DASH eating plan had blood pressures decrease an average 11 systolic/8 diastolic mmHg. There was a minimal blood pressure decline of an average 3 systolic/4 diastolic mmHg in patients who didn't change their eating or exercise habits.

By the study's end, only 15 percent of those who had changed both their diet and their exercise habits needed antihypertensive medications, as recommended by the 2017 American College of Cardiology/American Heart Association guideline, compared to 23 percent in the group that only changed their diet. However, there was no change in the need for medications among those who didn't change their diet or exercise habits - nearly 50 percent continued to meet criteria for drug treatment.

Hinderliter suspects lifestyle changes would be just as helpful to people with a higher risk of cardiovascular disease and in patients on medications for high blood pressure but that needs confirmation in future studies, he said.

Source: [American Heart Association](#)

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