

# Foods to Lower High Blood Pressure

High blood pressure (hypertension) is often called the silent killer because it has no warning signs or symptoms — until a stroke or heart attack occurs. One in three American adults has high blood pressure, and only slightly over half have it under control. In fact, millions of people have high blood pressure and don't even know it.

Fortunately, high blood pressure is easy to detect, and there are proven ways to bring it under control, including daily dietary choices. Simply ensuring you get at least 5 servings of vegetables per day can have a significant impact on your blood pressure and overall health.

Here are some foods that can lower your blood pressure:



- 1. Dark, leafy greens:** Spinach, broccoli, kale, collard greens and other dark leafy greens are full of nutrients as well as potassium, which can help to flush sodium out of your body. Sodium makes your body hold onto more fluid and raises blood pressure.
- 2. Berries:** Berries are rich in a natural compound known as anthocyanin, which can help your arteries to become wider and more flexible to lower your blood pressure and improve your overall heart health. Enjoy berries as a snack or a sweet treat after meals.
- 3. Yogurt:** Plain Greek yogurt is a great way to add calcium to your diet without too much sugar. Calcium helps your blood vessels tighten and relax appropriately. If you are looking for some natural flavor, throw in some berries which may help even more. Beware of yogurts that have added sugar or other artificial ingredients – plain Greek yogurt is best; add a touch of honey if you want added sweetness.
- 4. Seeds:** Unsalted seeds like pumpkin, flax, and sunflower seeds are full of vital minerals like magnesium, which can help to lower your blood pressure and relax your blood vessels. Sprinkle seeds on salads or oatmeal for some added flavor!
- 5. Oatmeal:** Oatmeal is a great whole-grain option that is healthy, filling and low in sodium. Oatmeal is full of fiber, which can help keep your weight and blood pressure under control. Add bananas or blueberries for a touch of sweetness. Steel-cut oatmeal is best; avoid sweetened quick oat in a package.
- 6. Beets:** Cooked beets and beet greens pack a lot of potassium, which can help to lower systolic blood pressure (the top number in a blood pressure reading).
- 7. Garlic:** Garlic helps to dilate (open up) your blood vessels, which ultimately reduces the workload of your heart. This helps to keep your blood pressure down – and can add a lot of flavor to your next dish!
- 8. Nuts:** Nuts have a strong effect on lowering both diastolic and systolic blood pressure readings. They are also a great source of unsaturated fat, which helps your heart.
- 9. Olive oil:** Olive oil contains polyphenols, which are protective antioxidants that improve blood vessel health and help them stay elastic. Use extra-virgin olive oil instead of butter, vegetable, or canola oil.
- 10. Legumes and beans:** These large sources of fiber can help to ward off heart disease!
- 11. Dark chocolate:** Dark chocolate can give you a boost of flavanol, which is a plant compound that can widen blood vessels and improve blood flow. If you are going to indulge, choose the darkest chocolate you can find – it must be at least 70% cacao to reap the health benefits. A little bit is all you need!



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