



Physical Activity and High Blood Pressure Medications

In 2008, the Dow Retiree Health Empowerment Program will be focusing on Medication Management and its impact on your health, quality of life, and healthcare costs. For the first quarter, we will be looking at the interactions between physical activity and some of the medications that are commonly prescribed to manage diabetes, high blood pressure, and hyperlipidemia (elevated cholesterol and triglycerides). February's topic is Physical Activity and **High Blood Pressure** medications.

Physical Activity & High Blood Pressure

High blood pressure, also known as hypertension, is a leading risk factor for heart attack and stroke. Hypertension is defined as a systolic blood pressure above 140 and/or a diastolic blood pressure above 90. Medical experts agree that regular exercise, particularly moderate intensity endurance activity such as walking, bicycling, and swimming, is one of the most important things **you** can do to prevent and control high blood pressure.

Exercise reduces blood pressure by strengthening the heart, increasing circulation to the muscles and skin, widening the arteries, and improving the body's ability to eliminate excess fluids. Exercise lowers blood pressure from the very first session; however, initial effects are temporary. Keep it up! By exercising regularly – 30 minutes per day, five to six days per week – studies show that you may be able to reduce your blood pressure by an average of 10 mm Hg within four weeks. That's the same effect as some blood pressure medications! That's why maintaining a regular exercise program *may actually reduce your need for blood pressure medication!*

Interactions & Precautions

If you take medication for high blood pressure, there are some things about physical activity that you need to know and do:

- Always warm up at a lower intensity for at least 5-10 minutes before starting exercise.
- Extend the cool-down period of your exercise session. Blood pressure medication may cause your blood pressure to drop too low if you stop exercising abruptly.
- After a meal, wait at least 90 minutes before exercising.
- If you take diuretics or beta blockers, be careful about exercising in the heat or for long periods of time. These medications impair the ability to regulate body temperature.
- If you are a fitness enthusiast or competitive athlete, talk to your doctor about the type of medication that is best for you. Some blood pressure medication may impair your ability to perform at a high level.
- If you are just beginning an exercise program, or want to increase your exercise intensity, get clearance from your physician first – then increase your activity level gradually.
- Check with your physician before beginning a strength training program. Some resistance exercises may increase your blood pressure – especially if you hold your breath when you lift!
- Monitor your blood pressure every day for the first few weeks to see how you are responding to your new exercise program. Check your blood pressure before exercising to get the most accurate reading.
- Do not exercise if your systolic blood pressure is above 180 or your diastolic blood pressure is above 110.

Links to Resource Articles:

- www.mayoclinic.com/health/high-blood-pressure/HI00024
- www.acsm.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Home_Page&template=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=4194
- <http://healthlink.mcw.edu/article/1031002350.html>