

Natural ways to treat hypertension

There are 5 supplements that I routinely recommend for my patients who have hypertension. First, let's establish what hypertension is. It is generally accepted that a blood pressure of 120/80 is normal, and that a blood pressure level that may be slightly higher than this is "just a little high". However, a blood pressure level between 120/80 - 130/89 is considered to be pre-hypertension, and a blood pressure of 140/90 or above is considered to be hypertension. Intervention is needed if the diagnosis of hypertension is made, as the risk of heart attack and stroke is increased. I recommend the following supplements as a natural approach to decreasing blood pressure.

Coenzyme Q 10 - this is a naturally occurring enzyme that the body makes and is used by every cell in the body. It has been shown to lower blood pressure. It declines with age (just as our reproductive hormone levels do). The 2 forms of CoQ10 are ubiquinol and ubiquinone. There are a number of studies that show that ubiquinol may be more effective than ubiquinone. Most of the recommendations are that a dose of 200-300 mg per day is an adequate dose. However, I tend to recommend a dose of 400-800 mg per day as I find that this dose increases plasma CoQ10 to an optimal level. The laboratory reference range for CoQ10 is 0.8-1.5 mcg/mL. Some studies show that a CoQ10 level of 3 mcg/mL is necessary to obtain a clinical response and patients with hypertension. The bottom line is that laboratory testing is very beneficial in order to determine the dose that is right for each individual.

D-Ribose - this is a naturally occurring simple sugar that is found in every cell of the body. It is primarily sold in powder form, and a dose of 5-10 g per day has been shown to be very effective in lowering the diastolic blood pressure. It can be mixed in a protein shake or any other beverage. It is also sold in capsule form. The supplement is also very beneficial for people who have fatigue.

Magnesium - this is a mineral that helps to promote heart health and it does lower blood pressure and it also helps to prevent cardiac arrhythmias. Most Americans are deficient in magnesium. The recommended dosage is 200-400 mg per day. However, this dose might not be adequate to achieve an optimal level. An RBC magnesium test should be performed to determine if the dosing is adequate. The reference range for an RBC magnesium level is 3.9-5.8 mg/dL. An optimal range would be 5.5 mg/dL or above. Note that taking magnesium can cause loose stools, and if this does occur taking a chelated form of magnesium can prevent this occurrence. Again, testing the levels of magnesium is important to determine if dosing is adequate. An RBC magnesium level rather than a serum magnesium level is more meaningful.

Hawthorn - Hawthorne very has been shown to reduce blood pressure similar to an ACE inhibitor (a prescription blood pressure medication). A dose of 500 mg 2-3 times a day has been shown to lower blood pressure.

DHA Omega-3s - omega-3 fatty acids are considered to be essential fatty acids because the body cannot manufacture them. They must be obtained by food and supplements. The 2 main omega-3 fatty acids are EPA and DHA. Research has shown that DHA at a dose of 300-800 mg daily as the best blood

pressure lowering benefit. Laboratory testing can be done to determine an optimal level of omega-3 fatty acids. The omega-3 index is a laboratory test which measures of the omega-3 fatty acids, EPA plus DHA and the red blood cells. The reference range is 4% to 8% with an optimal level being greater than 8%.

Another very important thing to note is that it is best to check blood pressure readings several times throughout the day. The blood pressure reading at night should drop by 10% below the average daytime blood pressure. If the blood pressure does not dip by 10%, this increases the risk for cardiovascular disease and stroke. I am a huge advocate of natural approaches to lower blood pressure; however, there are times when a pharmaceutical intervention may be indicated. With cardiovascular disease being the leading cause of death in men and women, hypertension must be taken seriously.