

Keeping Healthy with Holistic Food

By Jen Barker

Today, the average American citizen can expect to live longer but he or she may not be as healthy. For the baby boomers who have left their youth behind, they face a greater chance of disability than their parents did.

[Baby Boomers born after the war](#) and up through the mid-1960's have higher rates of diabetes, obesity and high blood pressure even though they are less likely to smoke than their previous generation. For African –Americans, the problem is more pronounced as greater percentages of [black people have cardiovascular illnesses](#) like heart disease, angina and high blood pressure. Almost half (47.0%) of non-Hispanic black women have high blood pressure, a truly awful figure when you pause to think about it for a moment. High blood pressure, or hypertension as it is medically known, can cause a cascade of other complications like heart failure (due to the heart having to pump so hard) and stroke (caused by a burst blood vessel in the brain or a blood clot interrupting the supply of oxygen).

As there is such a large number of black Americans with hypertension, there is also a higher chance of having a stroke. In fact, the risk of a first-time stroke is almost double that of white people. No one knows why this is the case, but genetics, differences in responses to medications and larger proportions of people in [the black community](#) living in high pollution areas are some of the potential reasons that the medical professional have speculated upon.

So, what can you do to prevent becoming part of the statistics? Luckily, holistic therapies offer a viable way to strengthen your cardiovascular health and help you maintain a healthy weight.

Foods that can Lower Your Blood Pressure, Ease Digestion and Help Your Heart

There are several foods that you can incorporate into your diet to lower your blood pressure or keep it at a healthy level.

Turmeric – Turmeric is a spice that is used traditionally to give rice a yellow color. It is one of the main ingredients in most curry powders and can be present in sauces, baked products, cereals, pickles, cake icings and even ice cream. It is used very frequently in Asian cuisine. It has been used as a traditional medicine for centuries. It has anti-inflammatory properties and is used as a remedy for arthritis, inflammatory bowel disease and digestive disorders. It has also been found to reduce blood pressure 'significantly' so by including it in your meals or taking a turmeric supplement you may improve your digestion at the same time as tackling any blood pressure problem. If you are taking any anti-hypertensive medication, please see your doctor before deciding to take turmeric supplements.

Garlic – Garlic, as well as being a powerful immune system stimulant that can assist your immune system in fighting disease and is useful for [immune problems like HIV](#) or auto-immune disease, it is also able to lower blood pressure. In a trial of 50 patients who had taken medication that was ineffective for them, capsules of [aged garlic extract](#) taken over 12 weeks were able to reduce hypertension. The authors suggested that this garlic extract was as good as frontline medications available to people with uncontrolled high blood pressure.

Go Nutty for a Healthy Heart – Nuts of different varieties are a rich source of nutrients and good fats that can regulate glucose (and so reduce your chance of getting diabetes), reduce inflammation, normalize blood pressure and improve circulation so that the blood flow to your brain is superior and you feel more focused and able to concentrate. Although nuts are high in fat content, it is 'good' fat that is beneficial to your heart and can actually help you lose weight by helping you feel fuller for longer.

Peppermint Tea – If you have digestion problems or suffer from high blood pressure and associated headaches, drinking peppermint tea regularly may help lower your blood pressure and so relieve tension on the blood vessels in your brain to ease headaches. If you suffer from dietary related migraines you may find that you can treat them or reduce your number of attacks by drinking peppermint tea. Again, if you are taking anti-hypertensive medication, please discuss this with your health care provider first.

Cocoa – Do you [love a cup of cocoa](#) before bed? Don't feel guilty for your indulgence because cocoa is extremely nutritious (particularly if you don't add sugar to it). Cocoa rich products actually reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease because they contain flavanols. Flavanols promote the dilation of your blood vessels and so reduce blood pressure and headaches. In a review of studies where participants were given cocoa for two weeks, they had a significant reduction in their blood pressure.

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