

THE 10 Rules of Exercising with HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE

A PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLE WRITTEN BY BRENDAN J. FOX

1 You can't afford NOT to exercise!
40% of the time, the first symptom of a heart attack is death¹². So, the best time to start exercising is right now!

“In cardiovascular disease, there is no replacement for lifestyle change. Regular moderate exercise 5-7 times a week for 45-60 minutes is an integral part of that change.”

~ DR. NARESH KUMAR, CARDIOLOGIST

Take a moment to consider the benefits of exercise:

- it boosts your daily energy
- heightens mental function
- improves sleep
- reduces stress
- increases strength
- and enhances self-image!

In addition, regular exercise reduces blood clotting¹¹, and has been shown to decrease risk of dying from heart disease by a staggering 50%⁵. Could anything else give you a better return on your time investment?

2 Get Physician Clearance First
Always have a doctor's consent before beginning an exercise program. A doctor needs to consider your special health considerations and the impact of your medications before making a decision on your exercise readiness. If working with a personal trainer, give them your doctors contact information so that they can discuss the best exercise approach for you, and maintain constant communication throughout.

3 Put the Right Food in the Fuel Tank
Common dietary recommendations for lowering blood pressure are based on the DASH Diet and/or Mediterranean Diet:

- Eat lots of fruits, vegetables, legumes, and grains
- Put an emphasis on unsaturated fats, including extra virgin olive oil, fish, avocado, nuts, and seeds
- Limit your consumption of sweets, margarine, and sodium containing foods such as soup, salty snacks, fast food, and canned foods.
- Additionally, supplemental Coenzyme Q10 (best absorbed if taken with a fat), and Ginkgo Biloba have been shown to help lower blood pressure¹⁹.

4 Resistance Training is Best
Exercise lowers blood pressure by improving the elasticity of the blood vessels, giving more flexibility and providing less resistance to blood flow.

“The best way to improve flexibility of the vascular system is to use short bursts of elevation followed by sudden recovery, then demanding activity again.”

~ IRVING DARDIK, VASCULAR SURGEON¹

The research shows that walking and cardio may help, but resistance training works best:

- **Don't cut the person to fit the coat:** Use a carefully individualized exercise plan.
- **Use lighter loads:** Lifting heavy weights can elicit a dramatic rise in blood pressure.
- **Perform the exercises in a circuit fashion:** Cycle through the exercises, without taking any exercise to the point of failure.

5 Always Warm-Up

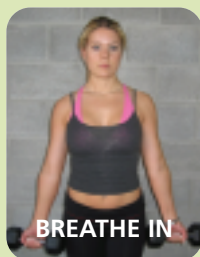
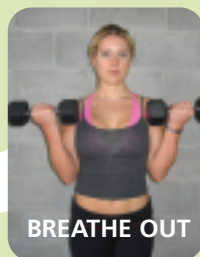
Check your blood pressure before you begin. If the blood pressure is in a relatively safe zone, ease into exercising with a proper warm up. Perform brisk cardio for 5-10 minutes, gradually increasing the intensity until you are on the brink of sweating.

6 Have an emergency plan

Cease exercising if you experience chest pain, dizziness, headache, shortness of breath, or nausea. If you suspect a heart attack, call 911 immediately. The American Heart Association recommends taking Aspirin (if not contraindicated) early in the treatment of a heart attack. 2 chewable baby Aspirins can greatly improve chances of survival by breaking up potential blood clots.

7 Breathe!

It can be common for exercisers to instinctively hold their breath during a specific exercise, creating pressure to cushion and support the spine. But to prevent blood pressure from skyrocketing, hypertensive individuals should never hold their breath. As an alternative, breathing through pursed lips can help maintain the supportive pressure in the trunk.



When exercising:

- Breathe out as you do the work
- Breathe in as you return the weight to the starting position.

For example, if doing a bicep curl, you would breathe out as you curl the weight up, and breathe in and as you lower the weight back down.

8 Stay Away from Harmful Exercises

There are a number of exercises that require extra caution due to their potential to raise blood pressure. These exercises should only be used under a physician's advice, or avoided altogether:

a Avoid exercises with the arms or legs overhead



b Avoid the Leg Press:



c Avoid exercises where you maintain a stationary position:



9 Cool Down at the End

During the exercise, much of the blood may pool in the muscles. A sudden stop in physical activity could cause one to faint as a result of a sharp drop in blood pressure. When finished exercising, incorporate a 10-20 minute cardio cool down to normalize blood pressure, while burning some extra fat in the process. Keep the intensity low enough that you would be able to engage in a conversation if necessary.

10 Take Your Body for a Tune-Up!

People spend many thousands of dollars on a top model car. They do upgrades, take it in for regular maintenance, and make repairs. But at the end of the day they always step out of that “slick looking” car, and find themselves stuck in an “old jalopy” of a body.

Why not make the body your top priority?

According to the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology, inactivity is the most prevalent modifiable risk factor for heart disease⁷. If you continue to defer maintenance on your body, debilitating problems will arise...then how will you get around?

“At around the time I had my heart attack, my blood pressure was 160 over 110, and my resting heart rate was 85 beats per minute. As a result of regular exercise and sensible eating, my blood pressure is now 120 over 70, I have a resting heart rate of 61 beats per minute, and I’ve lost 38 pounds.”

~ ED BUFFETT, CEO⁴



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Brendan J. Fox is a Kinesiologist who has amassed 14 certifications in the area of fitness, nutrition, and therapy. His vast knowledge and understanding of the body has enabled him to develop a strong reputation for success providing personal exercise coaching and health seminars in the Greater Toronto Area.

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