

Lifestyle Changes Help Lower Blood Pressure

A recent study conducted by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute shows that people with elevated blood pressure substantially reduce rates of high blood pressure if they make lifestyle changes and maintain them for a year and a half.

In the study, men and women with either prehypertension or hypertension (high blood pressure) who were not taking medication for blood pressure were assigned to groups. Those in two of the groups received counseling, increased their physical activity, and adopted a healthy diet. One of the groups additionally received guidance on and implemented the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) diet, a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and low-fat dairy products and low in saturated, total fat and cholesterol. A third group served as a control, and received limited guidance.

More than one third of those in the study had high blood pressure (hypertension) at the beginning of the study. Of these, sixty-two percent in the group with DASH guidance, and sixty percent in the intervention group without DASH successfully had their blood pressure under control after 18 months. Only 37 percent of the control group with hypertension had their blood pressure under control at the end of the study.