

The Relationship Between High Blood Pressure, Weight and Nutrition

Weight and High Blood Pressure

You may have heard that there is an obesity epidemic in America. Approximately 127 million adults in the U.S. are overweight and 69 million are severely overweight. There are a number of reasons why obesity is on the rise, including sedentary lifestyles, poor eating habits and an abundance of fast food options and large portion sizes.

Weight and blood pressure are closely related. When your weight increases, your blood pressure of then does too. If you are overweight, your risk of developing high blood pressure is two to six times greater than if your weight is healthy. Seventy-five percent of high blood pressure cases among American adults are directly related to obesity.

If you are severely overweight, more blood needs to be pumped from your heart to provide nutrients to body tissues, causing your heart to work harder. But many organs, particularly the kidneys, do not accept increased blood flow and produce hormones to reduce it by narrowing the arteries, resulting in an increased blood pressure.

Being overweight does not mean you will get high blood pressure. You can be overweight and have normal blood pressure. Nevertheless, obesity significantly increases your chances of developing this disease. On the other hand, losing weight decreases your chances.

Several studies have investigated effects of weight loss on blood pressure. In one study, 200 overweight individuals with high-normal blood pressure were started on a weight-reduction program. After six months the average loss of weight was 10 pounds, and the blood pressure fell by 5 mm Hg.

In addition to high blood pressure, there are other heart-related consequences of being severely overweight. Being severely overweight significantly contributes to your risk of diabetes, heart disease, stroke, arthritis and some cancers.

Assessing Your Weight

It is helpful to know and understand your Body Mass Index (BMI). BMI is a formula that factors weight and height to estimate risk for certain diseases. A high BMI indicates a person is at a greater risk for developing cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure, osteoarthritis, diabetes and perhaps some cancers. BMI does not tell you your percentage of fat or muscle. Check the chart on the next page to determine your own BMI.

To find your BMI risk level, look at your height in feet and inches in the first column of the Body Mass Index Risk Levels table on the next page. The ranges of weight that correspond to minimal risk, moderate risk (overweight) and high risk (severely overweight) are shown in the three columns for each height.

Body Mass Index Risk Levels

To Calculate Your Exact BMI Value:

1. Multiply your weight in pounds by 703
2. Divide by your height in inches
3. Divide again by your height in inches

If your BMI is 25 or greater, you are at increased risk of developing a weight-related disease such as high blood pressure.

Body Mass Index Risk Levels

Body Mass Index Risk Levels

Height

Minimal Risk (BMI Under 25)
Moderate Risk (BMI 25-29.9) Overweight
High Risk (BMI 30 and above) Obese)

4'10"

118 lbs or less

119-142 lbs.

143 lbs or more

4'11"

123 lbs or less

124-147 lbs.

148 lbs or more

5'0"

127 lbs or less

128-152 lbs

153 lbs or more

5'1"

131 lbs or less

132-157 lbs.

158 lbs or more

5'2"

135 lbs or less

136-163 lbs.
164 lbs or more

5'3"
140 lbs or less
141-168 lbs.
169 lbs or more

5'4"
144 lbs or less
145-173 lbs.
174 lbs or more

5'5"
149 lbs or less
150-179 lbs.
180 lbs or more

5'6"
154 lbs or less
155-185 lbs.
186 lbs or more

5'7"
158 lbs or less
159-190 lbs.
191 lbs or more

5'8"