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Chiropractic & Blood Pressure

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Introduction

Blood pressure is the force exerted by your blood against the walls of your blood vessels as it pumped out of your heart and around your body. Many factors can affect your blood pressure, including the strength and efficiency of your heart, the volume and thickness of your blood, the health and elasticity of your blood vessels (especially your arteries), your fitness status, your age and your overall health. Certain medications can affect your blood pressure, too. According to the American Heart Association, blood pressure should be less than 120/80 mm Hg in adults age 20 and up, though some variations are normal with posture changes, exercise, stress or sleep.¹ Chiropractic care may help stabilize your blood pressure, as it reduces stress, optimizes your health and harmonizes your body's many systems. Ask your chiropractor about how you can achieve or maintain a healthy blood pressure using natural approaches.

About High Blood Pressure

High blood pressure - blood pressures exceeding 140/90 mm Hg most of the time - can damage your body over time and lead to numerous unfavorable health outcomes, including heart, blood vessel and kidney problems, among other health problems. Chronic hypertension hastens the development of atherosclerosis and is a significant risk factor for stroke and

heart attack. The National Heart Lung and Blood Institute reports that high blood pressure, or hypertension, is common, affecting 1 in 3 American adults.² In most cases, high blood pressure does not cause any signs or symptoms, so it can be difficult to detect if you do not have your blood pressure checked on a regular basis.



The two principle types of hypertension are primary hypertension and secondary hypertension. Primary hypertension develops gradually over many years and has no identifiable cause. Secondary hypertension often develops suddenly, causes higher blood pressure than primary hypertension and *is* caused by an underlying health issue, such as kidney problems or adrenal gland tumors. Primary hypertension, or essential hypertension, is the most common type of hypertension, accounting for 90 to 95 percent of all cases.³

QUESTION:

What are some of the factors affecting high blood pressure?

- A) age
- B) thickness of blood
- C) fitness status
- D) all of the above

ANSWER:

D) all of the above

TRUE OR FALSE:

According to the AHA the best blood pressure reading for adults age 20 and up is 120/95

ANSWER:

False – 120/80

Finish this sentence....

The more common of the two types of blood pressure is called.....

- A) Primary hypertension
- B) Secondary hypertension

ANSWER:

Primary hypertension

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Can Chiropractic Care Help?

Dr. Alex Vasquez, a renowned chiropractor, naturopathic physician and osteopathic doctor, states that nutrition, lifestyle counseling and chiropractic adjustments should be the treatment of choice for anybody suffering from chronic primary hypertension.⁴ Indeed, chiropractors have long used natural approaches to address this common - but not normal- health problem. Some studies, including one published in the *Journal of Manipulative and Physiological Therapeutics*, have shown that chiropractic adjustments to the thoracic spine may help reduce blood pressure.⁵ Another study, published in 2007 in the *Journal of Human Hypertension*, states that restoring alignment of the Atlas - the topmost cervical vertebra - is associated with significant (and sustained) decreases in blood pressure that are similar to the effects of a two-drug combination therapy.⁶ Chiropractic manipulative therapy is just one of several approaches your chiropractor may use to help optimize your blood pressure.



Other Natural Approaches

Your chiropractor may use any or all of the following natural approaches to help you achieve your ideal blood pressure: Dietary changes, exercise, stress management techniques and smoking cessation. According to the Mayo Clinic, other beneficial non-drug approaches to reducing elevated blood pressure include limiting the amount of



alcohol you consume, reducing your caffeine intake, self-monitoring your blood pressure at home and getting support from family and friends.⁷ Maintaining a tranquil environment within the home is one of the best ways to keep your blood pressure in check.



Less conventional, but often no less powerful, methods to reduce blood pressure naturally include meditating, adopting and caring for a pet, spending more time in nature and spending less time at work. One study published in 2005 in the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* even found that walking on cobblestone mats (a practice that simulates the ancient Chinese health practice of walking barefoot over smooth river stones) improves physical function, boosts health-related quality of life and reduces blood pressure to a greater degree than conventional walking, in older individuals.⁸

Your chiropractor can offer you a well-rounded blood pressure treatment plan that may include regular chiropractic adjustments. Ask your chiropractor about the treatment methods that may best help you achieve your cardiovascular health goals.

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Quote to Inspire

“One way to get high blood pressure is to go mountain climbing over molehills”

H. Earl Wilson

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