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Stress and High Blood Pressure:

What is the connection?

Stress and long-term high blood pressure may not be linked, but taking steps to reduce your stress can improve your general health, including your blood pressure. Discover how.

By [Mayo Clinic Staff](#)

Stressful situations can cause your blood pressure to spike temporarily, but can stress also cause long-term high blood pressure? Could all those short-term stress-related blood pressure spikes add up and cause high blood pressure in the long term? Researchers aren't sure.

However, exercising three to five times a week for 30 minutes can reduce your stress level. And if you've been diagnosed with high blood pressure, doing activities that can help you manage your stress and improve your health can make a long-term difference in lowering your blood pressure.

Linking stress and blood pressure challenging

Your body produces a surge of hormones when you're in a stressful situation. These hormones temporarily increase your blood pressure by causing your heart to beat faster and your blood vessels to narrow.

There's no proof that stress by itself causes long-term high blood pressure. It may be that other behaviors linked to stress — such as overeating, drinking alcohol and poor sleeping habits — cause high blood pressure. However, short-term stress-related spikes in your blood pressure added up over time may put you at risk of developing long-term high blood pressure.

It's possible that health conditions related to stress — such as anxiety, depression, and isolation from friends and family — may be linked to heart disease, but there's no evidence they're linked to

HEART HEALTHY COMFORT FOOD

Slow-Cooked Pot Roast

- 1 TBS. olive oil
- 1 ½ lb. round roast
- ¼ tsp salt & ½ tsp pepper
- 1 medium onion, sliced
- 3 gloves garlic, chopped
- 2 stalks celery, chopped
- 2 potatoes, cut in pieces
- 2 carrots, cut in rounds
- 1 cup water

Preheat oven to 350°. In a deep oven safe pot, sear the meat on all sides in oil, 2-3 minutes per side. Sprinkle with S&P. Add onions, garlic, celery, potatoes, carrots and water. Cover and bake in the oven for 2 hours.

[Nutrition Information](#) Per serving: 211 calories, 5.6g fat, 57mg chol, 15g carbs, 25g protein, 158 sodium

SERVINGS: 6

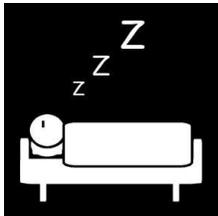


high blood pressure. Instead, it may be that the hormones produced when you're emotionally stressed may damage your arteries, leading to heart disease. It may also be that being depressed may cause self-destructive behavior, such as neglecting to take your medications to control high blood pressure or other heart conditions.

High blood pressure risks increase over the long term

Increases in blood pressure related to stress can be dramatic. But once the stressor disappears, your blood pressure returns to normal. However, even temporary spikes in blood pressure — if they occur often enough — can damage your blood vessels, heart and kidneys in a way similar to long-term high blood pressure.

In addition, if you react to stress by smoking, drinking too much alcohol or eating unhealthy foods, you increase your risk of high blood pressure, heart attack and stroke.



Stress-reducing activities can lower your blood pressure

While reducing stress might not directly lower blood pressure over the long term, using strategies to manage your stress can improve your health in other ways. Mastering stress management techniques can lead to other behavior changes — including those that reduce your blood pressure.

When looking for ways to manage stress, remember that you have many options. For example:

- **Simplify your schedule.** If you consistently feel rushed, take a few minutes to review your calendar and to-do lists. Look for activities that take up your time but aren't very important to you. Schedule less time for these activities or eliminate them completely.
- **Breathe to relax.** Making a conscious effort to deepen and slow down your breathing can help you relax.
- **Exercise.** Physical activity is a natural stressbuster. Just be sure to get your doctor's OK before starting a new exercise program,

especially if you've already been diagnosed with high blood pressure.

- **Try yoga and meditation.** Yoga and meditation not only can strengthen your body and help you relax, but also may lower your systolic blood pressure by 5 millimeters of mercury (mm Hg) or more.
- **Get plenty of sleep.** Being sleep deprived can make your problems seem worse than they really are.
- **Shift your perspective.** When dealing with problems, resist the tendency to complain. Acknowledge your feelings about the situation, and then focus on finding solutions.

The goal is to discover what works for you. Be open-minded and willing to experiment. Choose your strategies, take action and start enjoying the benefits.



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Call me anytime for questions

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