

HEALTH WISDOM

# Weight loss tips for hypertensive people

Anjali Mukerjee

The most effective lifestyle change for anyone suffering from hypertension is weight loss. Even if a hypertensive individual loses just a little weight, it can have dramatic effects on lowering their blood pressure. To prevent heart attacks and strokes, blood pressure should be maintained at 120/80 and not be in excess of 140/90. There are a number of foods that help lower blood pressure. Below are a few:



**Garlic has blood pressure reducing properties**

Garlic is known to lower blood pressure by allowing the muscles of the blood vessels to dilate. The compound found in garlic that helps in vasodilation is adenosine, a muscle relaxant. Both raw and cooked garlic can benefit those with blood pressure. But raw garlic is more potent. Garlic has other healing properties to its credit. It interferes with the formation of blood clots and also helps in reducing cholesterol. It helps improve immunity. It also prevents gas formation.

Chop three to four cloves of raw garlic, place it on a tablespoon and gulp it down like tiny pellets with warm water.

**Fruits and vegetables:** Studies show that switching to a vegetarian diet lowers the blood pressure. Fruits are concentrated with vitamin C, potassium and loads of soluble fibre, all of which contribute to lowering blood pressure. People who eat the least amount of fruits and vegetables are more prone to high blood pressure. Therefore, make sure that you eat foods with high amounts of vitamin C such as vegetables and fruits (not the synthetic tablets although that may also help to a certain extent) because fruits also have other qualities that contribute to lower blood pressure.

**Potassium:** It is now widely known that adding potassium to one's diet

decreases blood pressure. If one deliberately eats a diet low in potassium, their pressure can possibly soar by four to five points. In addition to low potassium intake, if a person is habituated to eating more salt they could develop hypertension over a period of time. In order to maintain sufficient amount of potassium, one could increase intake of foods such as banana, watermelon, potatoes, tomatoes, oranges, spinach, skimmed milk, soya beans, almonds, etc. Eating three to six servings of these foods would ensure sufficient potassium intake so as to keep blood pressure at bay.

**Calcium:** Some experts feel that hypertension is more likely due to the deficiency of calcium rather than due to excess sodium. They feel that consuming adequate calcium-rich foods such as milk, curd, green leafy vegetables, whole kabuli chana (chickpeas), rajma (red kidney beans), matki (moth bean), jowar, bajra and nachini (ragi) can neutralise the hypertensive effect of excessive sodium.

**Fish:** It has always been a heart-friendly food. Fish oils are known to help keep a check on blood pressure. If one is taking blood pressure medication, then consuming fishes such as mackerel and tuna, at least thrice a week, will help in reducing the daily dosage of medication.

# IT'S ALL IN THE MIND

Nootropics, aka brain power boosting supplements and foods, seem to be the latest fad for fitness freaks. Experts tell us the best ways to get a fit body with a fitter brain

Susan Jose

In the quest to ace the race in this competitive world, many are exploring various ways to get an upper hand both physically and mentally. In all this, several fad diets are marketed as being beneficial to the body and mind. Nootropics is one such term that is being heavily used these days. Whether it is via prescriptions drugs or through herbs in recipes, most fitness-oriented folks want to make the most of them.

So what exactly are they? "Nootropics, in simpler form, are called smart drugs or memory enhancers. They are natural chemical compounds or synthetic compounds that enhance cognitive functions such as memory, creativity, attentiveness, and alertness," says Pooja Thacker, dietician, Bhatia Hospital.

However, there are multiple facets to nootropics that one should be aware of. Luke Coutinho, holistic lifestyle coach - integrative medicine, says, "The problem with using a blanket term like nootropics is that it includes a variety of nootropics that are natural, synthetic or natural, but with high risk. The right nootropics are the ones naturally available and safe, too."

**WHY THE NEED?**

Our brain constitutes 3% of our body weight and about 15% of blood is pumped to it. Brain cells use only glucose for metabolism and lack of it can damage these cells.

Sedentary lifestyle, foods that are highly inflammatory, persistent worry and other habits that induce anxiety, sleeplessness, lack of sleep, poor digestive health, following fad diets, and nutritional deficiencies are some of the leading root causes of poor brain and mental health. They are also the problems for which people are seeking solutions. Even if the problems are not great, general inability to focus on simple tasks and increasing absent mindedness ring alarm bells, especially among those

fulfilling leadership roles.

Using supplement leads to more blood being pumped towards the brain. So more oxygen, nutrients and glucose are directed to it. This causes the brain to be more attentive.

**NOT A MAGIC BULLET**

Herbs having neuroprotective effects are used in treatment of Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, anxiety and dementia. "The problem begins when the pharmaceutical and nutraceutical industries attempt at selling packaged nutrients in isolation. Our bodies are simply not meant to take these nutrients this way," says Pune-based nutritionist Rita Date.

She instead suggests making long-term lifestyle changes to maintain cognitive health. These include solving challenging puzzles, reading, keeping up with current events and having meaningful dialogues and relationships. "Eat a balanced meal with plenty of vegetables, fruits, whole grains and nuts. Sleep well, and most importantly, exercise. Exercise has been proven to help brain function, and watching more than a few hours of television has proven to decrease it. Follow all these proven methods to help your cognitive function before looking for a pill," says Date.

**BEWARE OF HARM**

Experts say that side effects are mostly a concern for synthetic nootropics. These include headaches, insomnia, dehydration, digestive discomfort, mood swings, light headedness, lucid dreams, rapid heart rate and anxiety. While some have a high potential for tolerance, others are prone to addiction and withdrawal symptoms. Megadosing on natural nootropics can also overwhelm the brain and body.

With inputs from Veena Salvi, professor - department of botany, Somaiya Vidyavihar and Dr Pettarusp Wadia, neurologist, Jaslok Hospital and Research Centre.



**NATURAL NOOTROPICS**

**Eggs:** They have lutein, which helps in cognitive function and acts as a neuroprotective.

**Nuts:** Neurotransmitters in the brain are benefited by nuts, which help in its functioning, perception and memory improvement.

**Fish:** Fishes contain DHA, which helps in the development and function of the brain right through when the baby is in the womb and prevents related diseases like Parkinson's.

**Berries:** They contain the highest amount of antioxidants and has anti-inflammatory properties.

**Carbohydrates:** Small carb meals in short intervals is required, as our brain uses

carbohydrates as energy. A small carbohydrate dose helps in better brain function than three big meals.

**Caffeine:** Helps improve the brain's ability to synthesise long-term memories. But too much caffeine causes anxiety.

**Creatine:** Present in non-vegetarian sources such as chicken, creatine has phosphate bond attached. When this bond breaks down, it releases energy, which helps the brain function properly. Proper hydration is very important during this process.

Other natural nootropics include coconut oil, walnuts, flaxseeds, green tea, berries, turmeric, omega-3 rich foods, pure coconut and olive oil, green leafy vegetables, mushrooms like lion's mane, pomegranates and cacao.

# 'A balanced diet and adequate sleep is important'

HEALTH-STRUCK WITH ANJANA SUKHANI, ACTOR

Anjali Shetty

**Which is the one breakfast food that you must have?**  
Idli is my absolute favourite and a must-have breakfast item.

**One fattening food item that you just can't resist?**  
Cheese, I can eat it all day.

**How do you get back in shape post a fattening indulgence?**  
After a fattening meal, I go easy on other meals. I also include cardio in my fitness schedule.

**Do you prefer mini meals? What do they normally contain?**  
Yes, I do prefer mini meals. It could be anything ranging for a healthy hummus with vegetables, a veg sandwich, fox nuts or a handful of dry fruits.

**A diet plan that always works for you?**  
Smaller meals with high fibre and protein.

**Do you prefer working out indoors or outdoors?**  
I don't workout at home. I prefer attending kick-boxing classes and weight training in the gym.

**Your favourite physical activities?**  
I prefer running or swimming.

**A health tip that you rely on.**  
There is no one particular healthy tip. I guess a combinations of things constitute healthy living. Like, a balanced diet, adequate sleep and cardiovascular exercise, and a stress free happy life.



# Sleep your way to fitness

Having a glass of warm milk at bedtime helps one sleep

Susan Jose

It is not uncommon that with lack of sleep one tends to feel cranky and tired, and experiences a decrease in work productivity. But lack of sleep also greatly influences one's appetite. Moreover, not getting enough sleep impairs metabolism and disrupts hormone levels. A study led by scientists at the University of Chicago, USA, termed sleep deprivation "the royal route to obesity".

"The number of hours of sleep that is ideal for someone varies from person to person. But on an average, seven to eight hours of sleep is what is needed," says Munmun Ganerwal, nutritionist and fitness consultant, Yuktahaar.

With continued loss of sleep, the body's ability to sense the level of insulin in it (insulin sensitivity) reduces. The blood sugar released in the body after one eats is not well-regulated. At the same time,

the body secretes more cortisol (stress hormone), which makes it harder for insulin to do its work effectively. The result is that excess glucose stays in the bloodstream, which not only leads to weight gain but also

increases the risk of developing diabetes. Sleep also affects hunger-regulating hormones. Ghrelin is the hormone that stimulates appetite, while leptin decreases it by signalling the brain that one has eaten

enough. When the body is sleep-deprived, the level of ghrelin spikes, while the level of leptin falls, leading to an increase in hunger. Due to leptin insensitivity, one is also unable to perceive fullness or satiety and hence, they tend to overeat.

Apart from the fact that lack of sleep throws the hormones out of balance, it also kicks off a process in the body that raises the blood level of a lipid (fat) known as 'endocannabinoid'.

During sleep, human growth hormone (HGH) is released and protein synthesis takes place. This is how sleep enhances muscle recovery. This recovery, too, will take a back seat if one fails to prioritise sleep. To increase lean muscle mass, get stronger, lose weight and achieve optimal results, the best and cheapest solution is to prioritise sleep.

Ganerwal suggests the following tips to get a



Avoid exercising post sundown PHOTOS: ISTOCK; FOR REPRESENTATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY

- sound sleep:**
- Switch off all gadgets at least an hour before you sleep. Melatonin is the sleep-inducing hormone that is normally released by the pineal gland in the brain a few hours before bedtime. The light that the screens of these gadgets emit delays the release of melatonin, increases alertness, and resets the body's internal clock (or circadian rhythm) to a later hour.
  - Avoid stimulants like tea, coffee and desserts post sunset. Have a wholesome dinner but not close to bedtime. Make sure you eat two to three hours before you go to bed.
  - Have a glass of warm milk before going to bed. Milk and milk products contain an amino acid tryptophan that are a precursor to the sleep hormones.
  - Getting consistent exercise improves the quality of your sleep. However, doing so less than three hours from bedtime may make your body alert and it will then be difficult to fall asleep. Therefore, avoid exercising in the evening.
  - Rub ghee on the soles of your feet. Doing it just before going to bed has been an age-old therapy in Ayurveda, for relaxing the body and mind, and induce a good night's sleep.

susan.jose@hllive.com

anjali.shetty@hllive.com