

High blood pressure: Why it's called the "silent killer"



DeKalb Medical

This is the tenth article in a series focusing on cardiovascular disease presented by DeKalb Medical.

Hypertension is one of the greatest health problems facing the United States. Only 50 percent of patients with high blood pressure are on therapy, and only 30 percent have their blood pressure under control. Hypertension, also known as high blood pressure, is commonly known as "the silent killer." You may not have any symptoms but the disease could slowly be causing damage to your major organs, such as the brain, heart and kidneys.

A measurement of 120/80 millimeters of mercury or less is normal. A blood pressure between 120-139/80-89 is pre-hypertension. The systolic blood pressure or the top number measures the pressure it takes for the heart to pump blood throughout the body. The diastolic pressure or the bottom number measures the pressure when the heart relaxes between beats. A diagnosis of hypertension occurs when you have a blood pressure reading of 140/90 or greater on multiple occasions. If you have diabetes or chronic kidney disease, high blood pressure is defined as 130/80 or higher.

The risk of hypertension increases with age and is more common in African-Americans and Hispanic races. Lifestyle factors such as obesity, drinking large amounts of alcohol, sedentary lifestyle, and salt intake play a role in the development of hypertension. Most causes of hypertension are unknown, but about five to ten percent of cases are due to kidney or aorta abnormalities or disorders that narrow arteries. High blood pressure makes the heart pump harder and over time this can enlarge the heart, leading to congestive

heart failure or possibly a heart attack. Having high blood pressure along with other medical conditions such as high cholesterol or diabetes increases your chances of having a heart attack or a stroke.

High blood pressure can be prevented by changing your lifestyle. Eating a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grain fiber, lean meats and fish, but low in salt and saturated fats can lower your blood pressure. Avoiding excessive alcohol, quitting smoking and reducing stress are important in maintaining a normal blood pressure range. Exercise is also crucial in preventing the development of high blood pressure.

If you have already been diagnosed with high blood pressure, it is a controllable disease. Again, maintaining a healthy diet and exercise is essential. The typical American diet is high in salt. It is important to read food labels to identify the sodium content of food. You want to aim for an intake of less than 2,000 milligrams of sodium daily, and your requirement may be less than that if you have heart or kidney problems. Also, you should choose foods low in saturated fats to prevent raising cholesterol levels.

Many types of medications can be used to lower blood pressure. Medications can have side effects, and these should be discussed in detail with your healthcare provider. Be aware that some medicines, such as ibuprofen, cough and cold medications, may increase your blood pressure. Your blood pressure should be regularly monitored at your doctor's office. High blood pressure is a



Ask The Doctor
By: Hope Mitchell, M.D.

serious condition which can lead to devastating consequences; however, leading a healthy lifestyle can prevent or control this silent killer.

Healthy Pizza

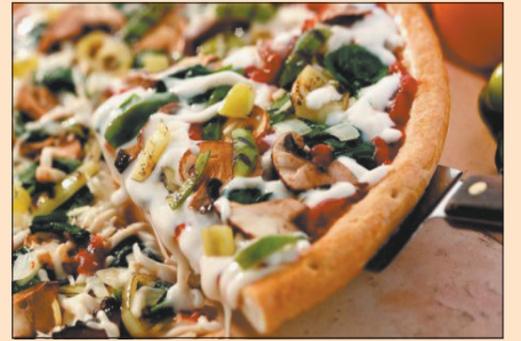
Pizza is one of the foods that best satisfies cravings. Use this healthy recipe to satisfy yours.

Crust:

- Use whole-wheat dough mix (available in specialty food stores)

Topping:

- 1/2 cup water
- 1/4 cup chopped onion
- 1/2 Tbsp. dried thyme
- 1/2 Tbsp. dried basil
- 4 cups sliced mushrooms
- 2 cups chopped zucchini
- 1 red bell pepper, chopped
- 1 cup ready-made pizza sauce
- Salt and pepper
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Spray large nonstick skillet with cooking spray and heat on medium-high. Add water, onion, thyme, basil and mushrooms and bring to boil. Add zucchini and bell pepper; reduce heat; simmer 2 minutes. Add salt and pepper, to taste. Discard liquid and set vegetables aside. Preheat

oven to 350 degrees. Roll dough into 12-inch circle and place on large sprayed baking sheet. Bake 7-10 minutes. Remove from oven and raise temp to 400 degrees. Spread pizza sauce on pre-cooked crust; top with vegetables. Sprinkle with Parmesan. Bake 20 minutes more or until crust is golden brown.

Source: American Institute for Cancer Research