



Down with Hypertension

High blood pressure (hypertension) is so common that it is easy to be casual about it; yet it is the single greatest risk factor for death from heart disease. The Institute of Medicine calls hypertension a neglected disease.

Hypertension causes blood to pound through our arteries at increased force. Think about what happens to cliffs that are pounded by the surf: they wear away. Arteries don't exactly wear away, but they do get breaks and tears. This triggers an inflammatory response which creates a sticky compound that attracts fats circulating in the blood stream. Plaque builds up, and we are on our way to a heart attack, stroke or blood clot depending on where in the body it is.

Many things contribute to high blood pressure. Genetics, stress, overweight and lack of exercise all play a role. If you have hypertension, besides taking your medications, find ways to manage stress and lose weight. Choose a form of exercise that you enjoy and do it regularly. It is also important to cut back on your salt intake and boost your potassium.

Salt is back in the news because of its hypertensive effect. Our salt consumption in the US has risen 50% in the last 40 years – that's a lot! Several groups (including the Center of Science in the Public Interest) are lobbying to get restaurants and food producers to decrease the amount of salt they add. Indeed, we get 80% of our sodium from processed or restaurant foods, 10% from what we add during cooking and 10% is found naturally in food.

Ironically, as manufacturers take the fats out of foods to reduce calories and make them healthier, they often add more salt to make them taste better. The recommendation is to keep our sodium intake below 2300 mg; 1500 mg is even better.

Changing the amount of salt added by restaurants and food producers is predicted to generate huge savings in healthcare. Meanwhile, there is still plenty you can do. Start by reading labels. Almost anything that comes in a package has salt added, but the amount can really vary. Use less processed foods overall and choose products that have less sodium.

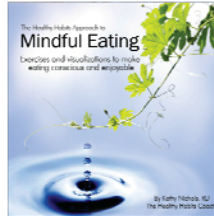
Get used to the taste of food with less salt. Our taste adapts surprisingly quickly. Salt is a flavor enhancer, so if you cook with less salt you can add more herbs than spices than usual. I like garlic: since usually I cook without salt I often add 5-6 cloves without it being overpowering.

Home cooking which includes plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables will also give a boost to your potassium intake – which is just as important as lowering sodium.

Sodium and potassium work together to balance the fluids in the body. Our ancestors diet was very high in potassium and

very low in sodium – so we are designed to absorb as much sodium as possible. The problem is that now our diet has reversed: we get too much sodium and too little potassium.

Check your blood pressure regularly, take your meds (even if you feel well), and make the lifestyle changes that will help keep your blood pressure low or under control.



Mindful Eating

My new CD on mindful eating is out!

I do mindful eating and relaxation exercises with my clients, and they often tell me they wish it was recorded so they could listen to it again. Now they can and so can you!

I had a lot of fun developing this. I asked several volunteers to listen and make suggestions. Their excellent advice made the CD even better. They told me the exercises were powerful and they were enthusiastic about getting the finished product.

Mindful eating is the missing link in most weight loss approaches. So much of our eating is unconscious: we eat because the food is there and not because we are hungry. When we eat unconsciously, eating takes on a life of its own, as if it is happening to us. You can change this by eating mindfully.

When you eat mindfully, you become aware of the direct experience of eating. You tune in to how you feel before and after you eat. Eating mindfully is more satisfying and more enjoyable. You will often eat less without feeling deprived: when you are mindful you know when you are done.

I'm offering free shipping if you buy the \$20 CD in March or April! Just enter the coupon code "ME101." Listen to the first track on my website: HealthyHabitsCoach.com.

Recipes for the Month

[Mashed Root Vegetables](#)

[Turkey Picadillo](#)

Click the links to the recipe, or find them on my blog at www.HealthyHabitsCoach.wordpress.com.



Save the Date: Mindful Eating CD Party

If you are local, join me as I launch the Mindful Eating CD. We'll eat, drink, and have fun. Healdsburg is beautiful in spring! Saturday April 24 from 1- 4 pm.

Email me for directions: kathy@HealthyHabitsCoach.com.

Kathy Nichols: Life Coach & Registered Dietitian

Are you ready to stop dieting and looking for a way of eating that is sustainable, enjoyable and healthy?

Discover Wellness from the Inside Out!



Kathy Nichols is the Healthy Habits Coach. A nutrition expert with 30 years experience as a registered Dietitian, her life coach training and certification is through the Coaches Training Institute. Change how you think about food!
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