

HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE AND CHOLESTEROL IN DIABETES

The main risk factors for a diabetic to develop complications in the heart or the arteries are: smoking, high blood pressure and a high cholesterol.

Check your blood pressure and cholesterol regularly

Generally speaking, neither high blood pressure nor high cholesterol produces any symptoms. However, if your blood pressure is repeatedly above 140/90 mmHg or your cholesterol is more than 250 mg/dl, you should go and see your doctor.

There are two types of cholesterol: LDL, known as bad cholesterol, because it builds up in the arteries and blocks them, and HDL, known as good cholesterol, because it helps to prevent such problems.

Remember that although high blood pressure and high cholesterol may not produce symptoms, they do increase the risk of lesions to the heart (heart attacks and heart failure), the brain (haemorrhages and strokes), the kidneys (kidney failure), the retinas (blindness), etc.

What are the aims of high blood pressure treatment?

Various studies have shown that the risk associated with high blood pressure and cholesterol is greater, the higher these are. The aim for diabetic patients with high blood pressure is to keep their blood pressure under 130/85 mmHg and their cholesterol under about 200 mg/dl.



Diet is the main factor in treatment

It is essential to reduce your salt intake:

- Cut down on the amount of salt you use in cooking and take the salt cellar off the table.
- Use salt substitutes.
- Eat special salt-free bread instead of ordinary bread.
- You must also cut down the amount you eat of certain foods: cold meats and sausages (including York ham), ready-prepared meals, pre-cooked or tinned meals, sauces and gravies, packet soups, appetizers (olives, crisps), biscuits, pastries, cakes, fizzy drinks, bicarbonate and fruit salts.
- You must also avoid eating too much fat, especially animal fat (butter, cold meats and sausages, cream, egg yolk) and burnt oils.
- Cakes and pastries are not good for the arteries either.
- Try to cook and eat with olive oil.
- The best ways of cooking food are to grill, steam, bake or boil it. Cut down on fried foods.
- If you do fry anything, never use the same oil twice.
- Small amounts of alcohol –up to a maximum of one glass of wine with each main meal- and 1 or 2 cups of coffee a day are permissible. Apart from these recommendations, your food should be varied and cover the full range.

Diabetes Education

Condiments to be used instead of salt

Garlic	Bitter taste
Fennel	Aniseed taste (mainly the seeds)
Vanilla	Sweet taste
Cinnamon	Sweet taste
Cloves	Enhance tasteless dishes
Parsley	Strong, penetrating smell
Mint	Very refreshing
White pepper	Spicier, less aromatic
Black pepper	Discreetly spicy
Green pepper	Gently spicy

Adopt a healthy lifestyle

In addition to an appropriate diet and regular physical exercise (at least 4 days a week during 45-60 minutes each time), there are other measures you must take. If you smoke, the first thing you must do is give it up right away. No excuses! You should also try to cut down your stress and anxiety levels.

If, after a reasonable time, you don't manage to bring your blood pressure under control by adapting your diet and changing your lifestyle, you may need to start treatment with drugs that combat high blood pressure or that act to lower cholesterol levels. Your doctor will tell you which is the medicine best suited to your needs and that will provide the best control.

What else should I know about the medicine I am taking to control my blood pressure?

You should bear in mind that it is not always possible to treat high blood pressure or high cholesterol with drugs and that, in any case, this is no substitute for a healthy diet and lifestyle, which you must always stick to at any event.

If your doctor has prescribed drugs for you, you must remember that:

- It is very important for you to follow the treatment strictly. You must not miss taking any of the pills when you are supposed to or stop the treatment without first speaking to your doctor.
- You must keep all your periodical follow-up test appointments recommended by your doctor and nurse. You must have your blood pressure taken regularly.
- Some patients need higher doses than others or may need to take more than one drug. This does not mean that your illness is at a more advanced stage.

