



Healthy Her

Exercise, Blood Pressure and Heart Health. Connecting the Dots...

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Does exercise increase your blood pressure or decrease it? It's a question that often is confusing. And so, the answer may seem at a glance to be equally as confusing as the response is, "both are correct". That's right. Both!

Here's how.

When you are actively engaged in exercise, your blood pressure rises in response to your increased heart rate and the increased force of blood pumping through your heart. This is a normal response that allows you to exert yourself. Hormones like cortisol and adrenalin are also elevated while actively exercising, both of which increase your blood pressure especially with vigorous exercise.

This is the acute response. But our aim is the goal of long-term health. That's where the benefits of long-term exercise and what happens over time are crucial to understand. Here are 5 ways that regular exercise lowers your blood pressure.

Exercise over time actually:

1. **Strengthens the heart:** That's right. Exercise makes your heart stronger. A stronger heart pumps blood more effortlessly and thereby reduces the force on your arteries.
2. **Improves blood vessel flexibility:** Exercise helps keep your blood vessels flexible and improves their ability to dilate, which reduces resistance to blood flow and lowers blood pressure.
3. **Reduces stress hormones:** Physical activity decreases levels of stress related hormones like adrenaline and cortisol which can raise blood pressure.
4. **Promotes weight loss:** Carrying less weight reduces the strain on your heart and arteries contributing to lower blood pressure.
5. **Improves insulin sensitivity:** Regular exercise can help regulate blood sugar and insulin levels, which in turn supports healthy blood pressure.

And so, #s 1-5 all combine to lower your resting blood pressure over time, despite the normal increase in blood pressure experienced during exercise. Capiisce?

Here's a 60 second Stairwell Chronicle to bring it all home:

<https://www.instagram.com/reel/Dlg3YFmg0Po/?igsh=MTVtaXBlbHV0bXY5eg==>

Best,

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You can follow me for more medical information at @drjaynemorgan on IG, YouTube, Threads, TikTok and Jayne Morgan, M.D. on LinkedIn