



food matters

with Consultant Nutritionist Sue Radd

diet to lower your BP

A lifestyle approach can be as effective as commonly prescribed medication in the treatment of mild hypertension, according to new research on the DASH diet.

Hypertension, or high blood pressure, puts you at risk of heart and kidney disease or stroke.

Benefits of the DASH diet are apparent within as little as two weeks and are maintained as long as you stay on it.

the DASH diet?

The DASH (dietary approaches to stop hypertension) diet promotes a regimen of eight to 10 servings of fruit and vegetables each day, which is more than twice the amount many people consume. It also includes two to three servings of low-fat dairy products daily. Foods emphasised in the DASH diet are rich sources of potassium, magnesium, calcium and dietary fibre—some of the nutrients involved in regulating blood pressure.

The positive results of the DASH diet are no surprise. It's well known that vegetarians (who generally eat greater quantities of fruits and vegetables) have lower blood pressure, despite not necessarily having a lower salt intake.

and related factors

Salt. Eating less salt by choosing low-salt and no-

added-salt foods will further enhance the effectiveness of the DASH diet.

Overweight. Maintaining your weight within the healthy range also helps prevent blood pressure rising as you get older. If you are overweight, a sustained loss of 10 per cent of your body weight will provide significant health benefits.

Alcohol. Drinking raises blood pressure. Limit alcoholic drinks to no more than two per day, or preferably avoid it altogether.

Physical activity. Regular walking, swimming, cycling and light jogging all help lower your blood pressure if you have mild hypertension. Check with your doctor for advice on exercise if your blood pressure is very high.

Smoking. This habit will both aggravate and cause hypertension. Get help and quit smoking if you are a smoker.