



## The 17 Best Foods for High Blood Pressure

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# *The Journal*



# New Normal; How the pandemic is shaping home cooking trends- Food shopping on the rise

San Francisco Oct 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020 ; As the coronavirus pandemic presses on consumers have settled into routines that involve a lot more home cooking, and studies suggest these habits will continue after the pandemic. This shift is driving a change in shopping lists as well. Food retailers and manufacturers can cater to consumers' needs with options that make home cooking simpler, faster and healthier -- and bring some much-needed variety to the menu.

Home cooking is the new normal

Several factors are contributing to the continued prevalence of home cooking. Many people feel unsafe going to restaurants, but the decline in dine-in traffic isn't the only reason people are turning on their stoves and ovens more often. Consumers who are working from home no longer stop for breakfast or coffee on their commute, nor do they frequent the lunch spots around their offices. For many, financial concerns are also a catalyst for more home-cooked meals, which come at a lower cost and often create leftovers that can be stretched much further than restaurant meals.

More than half of shoppers (55%) said they are eating at home more often



since the pandemic began, according to an Acosta report released earlier this month.

The survey found that even after the pandemic is over, many consumers anticipate they will dine out less than before or not at all.

An earlier study by Bloomberg News and Morning Consult gleaned similar results, with almost a third of those surveyed saying they plan to cook at home even more once stay at home orders are lifted. Just 7% said they plan to cook less after the economy fully reopens.

The survey of 2,200 US consumers found that the intention to keep up with home cooking is especially strong among younger demographics. When asked about their post-pandemic plans, a full 43% of Gen Z respondents said they intend to cook at home more after the pandemic is over.

As a result of people logging more hours in the kitchen, grocery retailers are seeing shopping habits shift to accommodate different types of cooking.

"People are moving on to more complex cooking, and we don't see that going away," Kroger Chairman and CEO Rodney McMullen told The New York Times. The supermarket chain reported a 30% spike in sales at the beginning of the pandemic.

The rise of more involved cooking projects suggests that consumers are feeling more confident about their ability in the kitchen. In fact, about 58% of SmartBrief subscribers said they think their cooking skills have improved during the pandemic, according to a recent reader poll in The Friday Feed.

However, just because people may be feeling more skilled, it doesn't mean they aren't looking for ways to spend less time and energy on cooking.

#### Hungry for shortcuts, more meal ideas

Even consumers who love to cook may find themselves losing steam when it comes to whipping up multiple meals a day. Some 65% of consumers said they are tired of cooking at home, according to Datassential research published in the report "Why Investing in Innovation is More Important than Ever Post-Quarantine."

A survey conducted by OnePoll on behalf of meal kit company Sun Basket produced similar data, with 55% of the 2,000 US consumers surveyed saying cooking during the pandemic has left them feeling fatigued.

Consumers are cooking an average of nine meals a week, according to the survey, which revealed that the average respondent has cooked the same meal 28 times since the pandemic began.

In addition to coming up with new recipe ideas, saving time in the kitchen and generally spending less time on meal preparation

were common goals among those surveyed. Seven in 10 (69%) said they wish they could cook a healthy dinner more quickly and 43% want to spend less time planning out their meals.

Planning different meals every day was also among the challenges named by consumers in Acosta's survey, with 40% of respondents listing it among their biggest challenges related to meal planning.

The sales and marketing company recommends several tactics for food manufacturers looking to meet consumer needs in the new normal, including utilizing technology to offer labor-saving solutions and leaning on the power of partnerships by bringing foodservice brands and chef-inspired ideas into retail.

"With more than half of consumers eating at home more often and some with less money to spend, there are a myriad of challenges and opportunities for retailers and manufacturers to navigate," Acosta's Vice President of Business Intelligence Colin Stewart said.

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## The 17 Best Foods for High Blood Pressure

October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020 Hypertension, or high blood pressure, is the most common preventable risk factor for heart disease (1Trusted Source).

Over 1 billion people around the world have high blood pressure, which is defined as systolic blood pressure (SBP) values (the top number) of 130 mm Hg or more, diastolic blood pressure (DBP, the bottom number) of more than 80 mm Hg, or both (2Trusted Source).

Medications, including angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors, are commonly used to reduce blood pressure levels. However, lifestyle changes, including dietary modifications, can help lower blood pressure levels to optimal ranges and reduce your risk of heart disease.

Following a nutritious, heart-healthy diet is suggested for all people with high blood pressure, including those on blood-pressure-lowering medications (1Trusted Source).

A healthy diet is essential for lowering blood pressure and maintaining optimal levels, and research has shown that including certain foods in your diet, especially those high in specific nutrients like potassium and magnesium, reduces your blood pressure levels (1Trusted Source, 3Trusted Source).

Here are the 17 best foods for high blood pressure.

## 1. Citrus fruits

Citrus fruits, including grapefruit, oranges, and lemons, may have powerful blood-pressure-lowering effects. They're loaded with vitamins, minerals, and plant compounds that may help keep your heart healthy by reducing heart disease risk factors like high blood pressure (4Trusted Source).



A 5-month study involving 101 Japanese women demonstrated that daily lemon juice intake combined with walking was significantly correlated with reductions in SBP, an effect that the researchers attributed to the citric acid and flavonoid content of lemons (5Trusted Source).

Studies have also shown drinking orange and grapefruit juice may help reduce blood pressure. Yet, grapefruit and grapefruit juice can interfere with common blood-pressure-lowering medications, so consult your healthcare provider before adding this fruit to your diet (4Trusted Source, 6Trusted Source).

## 2. Salmon and other fatty fish

Fatty fish are an excellent source of omega-3 fats, which have significant heart health benefits. These fats may help reduce blood pressure levels by reducing inflammation and decreasing levels of blood-vessel-constricting compounds called oxylipins (4Trusted Source).



Research has linked higher intakes of omega-3-rich fatty fish to lower blood pressure levels.

A study in 2,036 healthy people found that those with the highest blood levels of omega-3 fats had significantly lower SBP and DBP than those with the lowest blood levels of these fats. Higher omega-3 intake has also been associated with a lower risk of hypertension (7Trusted Source, 8Trusted Source).

## 3. Swiss chard

Swiss chard is a leafy green that's packed with blood-pressure-regulating nutrients, including potassium and magnesium. One cup (145 grams) of cooked chard delivers 17% and 30% of your daily potassium and magnesium needs, respectively (9Trusted Source).



In people with high blood pressure, every 0.6-gram per day increase in dietary potassium is associated with a 1.0 mm Hg reduction in SBP and a 0.52 mm Hg reduction in DBP. One cup (145 grams) of Swiss chard packs 792 mg of this important nutrient (10Trusted Source).

Magnesium is also essential for blood pressure regulation. It helps reduce blood pressure through several mechanisms, including by acting as a natural calcium channel blocker, which blocks the movement of calcium into heart and arterial cells, allowing blood vessels to relax (11).

#### 4. Pumpkin seeds

Pumpkin seeds may be small, but they pack a punch when it comes to nutrition.

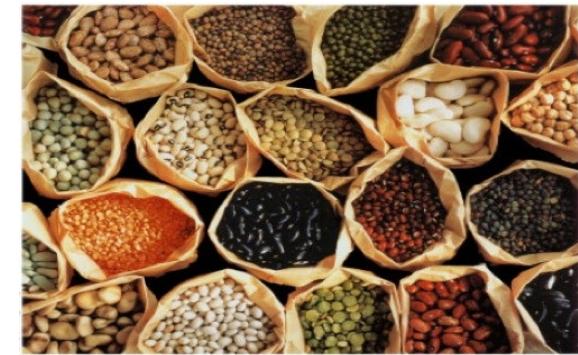
They're a concentrated source of nutrients important for blood pressure control, including magnesium, potassium, and arginine, an amino acid needed for the production of nitric oxide, which is essential for blood vessel relaxation and blood pressure reduction (12Trusted Source, 13Trusted Source, 14Trusted Source).

Pumpkin seed oil has also been shown to be a powerful natural remedy for high blood pressure. A study in 23 women found that supplementing with 3 grams of pumpkin seed oil per day for 6 weeks led to significant reductions in SBP, compared with a placebo group (15Trusted Source).



#### 5. Beans and lentils

Beans and lentils are rich in nutrients that help regulate blood pressure, such as fiber, magnesium, and potassium. Numerous studies have shown that eating beans and lentils may help lower high blood pressure levels.



A review of 8 studies that included 554 people indicated that, when exchanged for other foods, beans and lentils significantly lowered SBP and average blood pressure levels in people with and without hypertension (16Trusted Source).

#### 6. Berries

Berries have been associated with a variety of impressive health benefits, including their potential to reduce heart disease risk factors like high blood pressure. Berries are a rich source of antioxidants, including anthocyanins, which are pigments that give berries their vibrant color.



Anthocyanins have been shown to increase nitric oxide levels in the blood and reduce the production of blood-vessel-restricting molecules, which may help reduce blood pressure levels. However, more research in humans is needed to confirm these potential mechanisms (17Trusted Source).

Blueberries, raspberries, chokeberries, cloudberry, and strawberries are just some of the berries that have been associated with blood-pressure-lowering effects (17Trusted Source).

## 7. Amaranth

Eating whole grains like amaranth may help lower your blood pressure levels. Studies show that diets rich in whole grains may decrease your risk of high blood pressure.

A review of 28 studies found that a 30-gram per day increase in whole grains was associated with an 8% reduced risk of high blood pressure (18Trusted Source).

Amaranth is a whole grain that's particularly high in magnesium. One cooked cup (246 grams) provides 38% of your daily magnesium needs (19Trusted Source).



## 8. Pistachios

Pistachios are highly nutritious, and their consumption has been linked to healthy blood pressure levels. They're high in a number of nutrients essential for heart health and blood pressure regulation, including potassium (20Trusted Source).

A review of 21 studies found that among all the nuts included in the review, pistachio intake had the strongest effect on reducing both SBP and DBP (21Trusted Source).



## 9. Carrots

Crunchy, sweet, and nutritious, carrots are a staple veggie in many people's diets. Carrots are high in phenolic compounds, such as chlorogenic, p-coumaric, and caffeic acids, that help relax blood vessels and reduce inflammation, which may help lower blood pressure levels (22Trusted Source).

Although carrots can be enjoyed cooked or raw, eating them raw may be more beneficial for reducing high blood pressure. A study that included 2,195 people ages 40–59 found that raw carrot intake was significantly associated with lower blood pressure levels (23Trusted Source).



Another small study in 17 people demonstrated that daily intake of 16 ounces (473 mL) of fresh carrot juice for 3 months led to reductions in SBP but not DBP (22Trusted Source).

## 10. Celery

Celery is a popular vegetable that may have positive effects on blood pressure. It contains compounds called phthalides, which may

help relax blood vessels and lower blood pressure levels (24Trusted Source).

The same study that associated raw carrot intake with reduced blood pressure found that among commonly consumed cooked vegetables, cooked celery intake was significantly associated with reduced blood pressure (23Trusted Source).

## 11. Tomatoes and tomato products

Tomatoes and tomato products are rich in many nutrients, including potassium and the carotenoid pigment lycopene.

Lycopene has been significantly associated with beneficial effects on heart health, and eating foods high in this nutrient, such as tomato products, may help reduce heart disease risk factors like high blood pressure (25Trusted Source).

A review of 21 studies concluded that consuming tomato and tomato products improves blood pressure and may help reduce your risk of heart disease and heart-disease-related death (26).

## 12. Broccoli

Broccoli is known for its many beneficial effects on health, including the health of your circulatory system. For example, adding this cruciferous veggie to your diet may be a smart way to reduce blood pressure.

Broccoli is loaded with flavonoid antioxidants, which may help lower blood pressure by enhancing blood vessel function and increasing nitric oxide levels in your body (27Trusted Source).

A study that included data from 187,453 people found that those who consumed 4 or more servings of broccoli per week had a lower risk of high blood pressure than those who consumed broccoli once a month or less (28Trusted Source).

## 13. Greek yogurt

Greek yogurt is a nutrient-dense dairy product that's packed with minerals that help regulate blood pressure, including potassium and calcium (29Trusted Source).

A review of 28 studies found that consuming 3 servings of dairy per day was associated with a 13% lower risk of high blood pressure, as well as that a 7-ounce (200-gram) increase in dairy intake per day was associated with a 5% reduction in hypertension risk (18Trusted Source).

## 14. Herbs and spices

Certain herbs and spices contain powerful compounds that may help reduce blood pressure by helping blood vessels relax (30Trusted Source).



Celery seed, cilantro, saffron, lemongrass, black cumin, ginseng, cinnamon, cardamom, sweet basil, and ginger are just some of the herbs and spices that have been shown to have blood-pressure-lowering potential, according to results from animal and human research (31Trusted Source, 32Trusted Source).

#### 15. Chia and flax seeds

Chia and flax seeds are tiny seeds that are teeming with nutrients that are essential for healthy blood pressure regulation, including potassium, magnesium, and fiber (33Trusted Source).

A small, 12-week study that included 26 people with high blood pressure found that supplementing with 35 grams of chiaseed flour per day led to blood pressure reductions in both medicated and unmedicated people, compared with a placebo group (34Trusted Source).



Additionally, results from a review of 11 studies suggested that eating flax seeds may help lower blood pressure levels, especially when consumed in their whole seed form for 12 weeks or longer (35Trusted Source).

#### 16. Beets, beet greens, and beet juice

Beets and beet greens are exceptionally nutritious, and eating them may help promote healthy blood pressure levels. They're high in nitrates, which help relax blood vessels and may lower blood pressure (36Trusted Source, 37Trusted Source).

Some research has shown that adding beets and beet products to your diet may help promote healthy blood pressure levels.

For example, a 2-week study in 24 people with high blood pressure found that consuming both 8.4 ounces (250 mL) of beet juice and 8.8 ounces (250 grams) of cooked beets significantly reduced blood pressure, although it found that the beet juice was more effective (38Trusted Source).

Although other studies have also linked beet and beet juice intake to positive effects on blood pressure, not all studies have shown positive results.

Some studies have suggested that the effects of beets on blood pressure are short lived and may not make a substantial difference on long-term blood pressure control (39Trusted Source, 40Trusted Source).

Nevertheless, beets, beet juice, and beet greens are all highly nutritious and may help improve overall health when added to your diet (41Trusted Source).

#### 17. Spinach

Like beets, spinach is high in nitrates. It's also loaded with antioxidants, potassium, calcium, and magnesium, making it an excellent

choice for people with high blood pressure (42Trusted Source).

In a study in 27 people, those who consumed 16.9 ounces (500 mL) of a high nitrate spinach soup daily for 7 days experienced reductions in both SBP and DBP, compared with those who consumed low nitrate asparagus soup (42Trusted Source).

The spinach soup also decreased artery stiffness, which may help reduce blood pressure and improve heart health (42Trusted Source).

#### The bottom line

Along with other lifestyle modifications, adopting a healthy diet can significantly lower blood pressure levels and help reduce your heart disease risk.

According to research, adding certain foods like leafy greens, berries, beans, lentils, seeds, fatty fish, citrus fruits, and carrots to your meals and snacks may help you reach and maintain optimal blood pressure levels.

If you have high blood pressure levels or are looking to maintain healthy blood pressure, adding a few of the foods listed in this article to your diet may help.



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