

## Exercise, When Combined With Weight Loss, Reduces Blood Pressure Even in Stressful Situations

If your most recent doctor visit revealed you had high blood pressure, and your health care provider determined that your lack of physical activity and the stress in your everyday life was the cause, new research points to exercise as the solution to lowering your blood pressure.

In a study published in *Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise*, researchers investigated the effects of exercise training and weight loss on blood pressure that was attributed to physical activity and emotional stress during daily life. Over 100 people with high blood pressure who were not taking medication for it agreed to have their blood pressure measured throughout the course of the 6-month study. The participants were divided into three groups: a group that used a combined exercise and weight management program, a group that used only exercise, and a control group that did not exercise or use the weight management program.

Before treatment, increased levels of physical activity and emotional distress in daily life were associated with increases in blood pressure and heart rate in all groups. After treatment, the group that exercised and controlled their weight had significantly lower blood pressure and heart rate during both high and low levels of physical activity and emotional distress, as compared to the group that did not exercise or control their weight. The group that exercised only had similar blood pressure levels as the weight management/exercise group, although the exercise group had significantly lower blood pressure than the control group during low but not high levels of physical activity and emotional distress.

The conclusion? Exercise, especially when combined with weight loss, reduces blood pressure levels at rest and in situations that typically elevate blood pressure, such as intense physical activity and emotional distress.

**Source:** Steffen PR, Sherwood A, Gullette ECD, Georgiades A, Hinderliter A, Blumenthal J. Effects of exercise and weight loss on blood pressure during daily life. *Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise* October 2001;33:1635-1640. (Abs.)