



How to lower your blood pressure with dietary changes

Traditionally when diagnosed with High Blood Pressure or Hypertension, we have been advised by our doctors to use less salt, drink less alcohol and lose some weight. While all of this advice is important, recent research has shown that eating larger quantities of fruit and vegetables, about 5- 6 helpings each day will help lower blood pressure. Fruit and vegetables are high in potassium and magnesium, nutrients that have been shown to lower blood pressure. If this is combined with eating more calcium rich foods, the effect on blood pressure can be even greater. The best calcium foods are milk and dairy foods. These are the foods found on the 'Milk, yogurt and cheese Shelf of the Food Pyramid'.

Recent studies have shown that those people with high blood pressure who ate a diet rich in fruit and vegetables (5-6 servings per day) and consumed their recommended calcium intake - 3 servings of dairy foods, had reductions in blood pressure similar to those reported for people taking blood pressure lowering medication.

So why don't you help improve your blood pressure level by eating more fruit and vegetables. Aim for 5-6 servings a day from the 'fruit and vegetable shelf'. And make sure to take the recommended 3 servings of milk and dairy foods every day. Keep in mind, that the low fat dairy foods have the same amount of calcium. So by choosing them instead, you will also help lower your fat and calorie intake.

Recipe

Mixed Vegetable Stir-Fry with Cashews

1 large onion
1 red pepper
1 yellow pepper
100g carrots
100g mushrooms
100g mangetout
100g broccoli
4 spring onions
1-2 tablespoon of olive oil
4 tablespoons of cashew nuts
100g beansprouts
Small piece (2.5 cm /1") of fresh ginger
3 tablespoons of Hoi-sin sauce or any other stir-fry sauce

Note: 2 packs of stir-fry vegetable mix can be substituted for the vegetables above.

Method

Prepare the vegetables: cut the onion and peppers into small chunks and the peeled carrots into thin sticks. Slice the mushrooms. Top and tail the mangetout. Break the broccoli into small florets and slice the spring onions. Grate the fresh ginger.

Heat the oil in a wok or large pan and cook the cashew nuts until brown. Remove the nuts and transfer to a plate. Add the ginger to the hot oil and stir-fry for 20 seconds. Then, add the onions, peppers and carrots. Fry and toss for 2-3 minutes. Next, add the mushrooms, mangetout and broccoli. Stir fry for 2-3 minutes more and then add the spring onions and beansprouts.

Put the cashews back in the pan and stir in the hoi-sin sauce. Cook for a further 2-3 minute and serve with brown rice.