

# Ask Leyla: Why is my blood pressure rising?



**Q:** I am a 46-year-old woman. I have never suffered from high blood pressure. In fact, my blood pressure always tended to be on the 'low' side. Recently, this has changed. Within a matter of weeks my blood pressure has increased. Two days ago, my reading was 127 over 87. Today it is 132 over 93. Nothing drastic has changed in my life. I have always been on the go at work and home. But this reading has me worried. What do you think is the cause and what can I do?

**A:** Barring any underlying medical conditions, blood pressure tends to increase with weight gain and/or a sedentary lifestyle—especially as we get older. This is exacerbated with impending menopause. Moreover, decreased production of progesterone at your age decreases the ability to feel relaxed. This may translate to higher blood pressure.

How much caffeine do you consume? As little as one cup of java or strong tea can cause vasoconstriction (contraction of blood vessels) leading to increased blood pressure. Additionally, excess caffeine can stimulate the release of epinephrine by your adrenals, causing higher blood pressure. And this effect is even stronger if you're a slow metabolizer of caffeine.

As I discussed in a previous article losing five to seven percent of your body

weight can help reduce blood pressure. You can do that by implementing a low carbohydrate diet, since this is the best method to reduce body fat.

Alcohol intake beyond a minimal amount can increase cortisol levels that can spike blood pressure. Alcohol intake also robs sleep—increasing cortisol yet again.

High cortisol causes the accumulation of body fat—especially around the abdomen. What happens then? You guessed it: High blood pressure.

To your health!

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