

HYPERTENSION
AWARENESS MONTH

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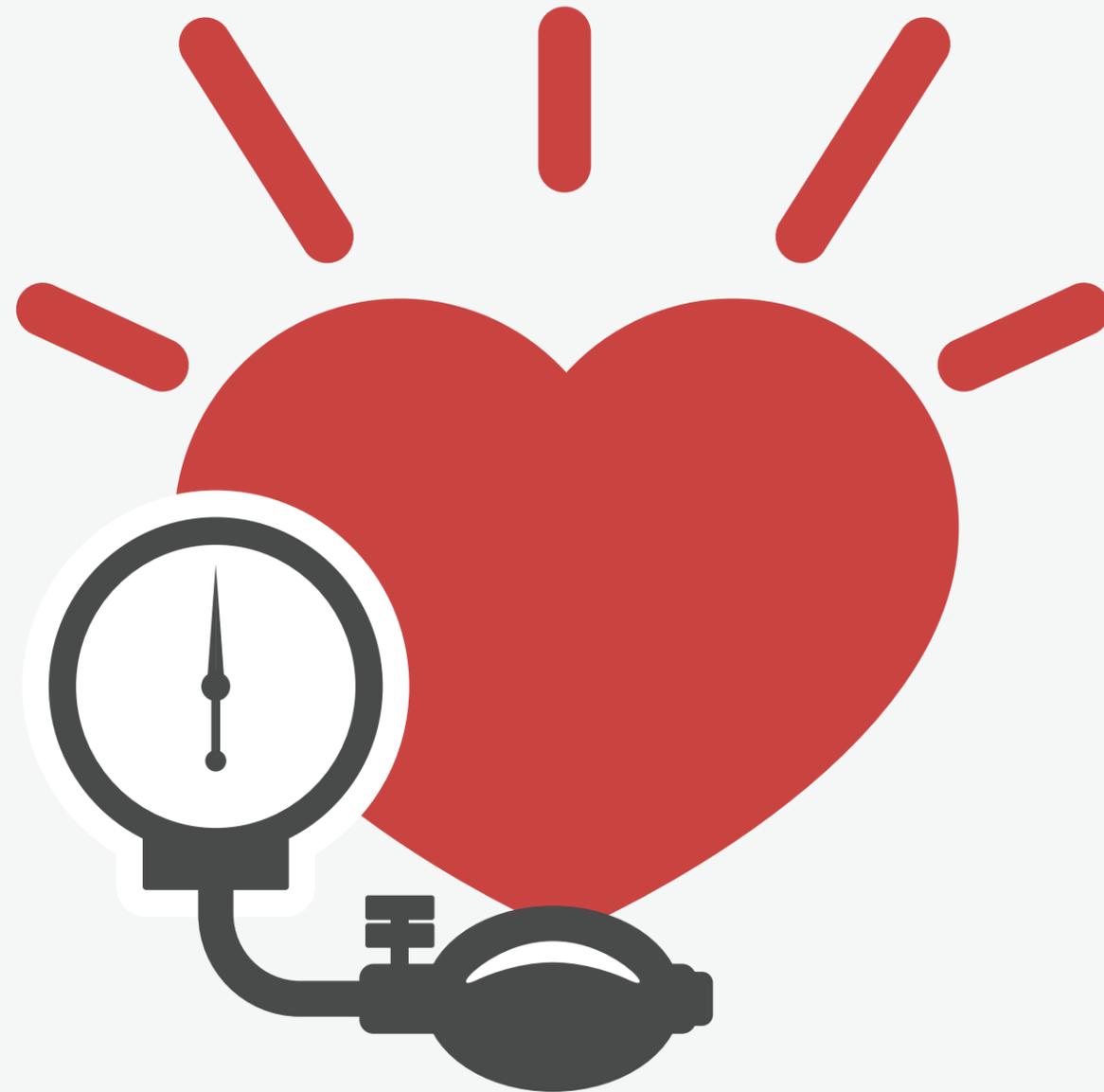
HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE:
HOW TO KEEP IT LOW AND UNDER CONTROL

DANGEROUSLY GOOD! KEEPING AN EYE ON
SODIUM IN THAI FOOD

SMOOTHIES:
ARE THEY REALLY HEALTHY?



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BLOOD PRESSURE: HOW TO KEEP IT LOW AND UNDER CONTROL

According to Canadian Health Magazine, high blood pressure is the most common health risk issue faced by Canadians today. The Canadian Heart and Stroke Foundation reports that 1 in 5 Canadians are affected by high blood pressure, yet 42% have no idea!

WHAT DO BLOOD PRESSURE READINGS TELL US?

Your blood pressure is a measure of the pressure of your blood flow against the walls of your blood vessels. The first step in understanding high blood pressure is learning what your numbers mean. Blood pressure changes when the heart contracts and relaxes, thus blood pressure is expressed as two numbers:

- **Systolic Pressure:** The pressure experienced when the heart contracts and forces blood into the blood vessels. This is the higher of the two numbers in a blood pressure reading, and is typically expressed first (eg. a blood pressure reading of 120/70 equals a systolic pressure of 120).
- **Diastolic Pressure:** The pressure experienced when the heart is relaxed. This is the lower of the two numbers in a blood pressure reading, and is typically expressed second (eg. a blood pressure reading of 120/70 equals a diastolic pressure of 70).

An ideal blood pressure reading should be around 120/70, but healthy blood pressure varies from person to person. For instance, people in particularly good physical health, who exercise regularly, may have lower blood pressure.

On the other hand, “high normal” blood pressure is considered a reading between 130/85 and 139/89. When someone has “high normal” blood pressure they are likely to develop hypertension at some point. Hypertension is defined by a blood pressure reading of 140/90 or higher.

A person’s blood pressure varies considerably throughout the day. Your blood pressure is usually lower when you are at rest and higher when you are active. Your blood pressure may vary between lying down vs. standing up. Other factors such as your emotional state, pregnancy, smoking, and medication can also change your blood pressure.

WHY DO SO MANY PEOPLE HAVE HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE?

Desk jobs, long commutes to work, the fast pace of modern life, and the availability of cheap, unhealthy, salty and satisfying foods has led more people to adopt unhealthy lifestyles than ever before. For example, a typical can of (seemingly healthy) vegetable soup may contain up to

1,000 mg of sodium in one cup. That’s nearly half the daily recommended limit of sodium in one small can of soup! Similarly, sauces and condiments often contain a lot more sodium than you realize. Excess sodium in the bloodstream causes higher blood pressure because of fluid accumulation and undue strain on the blood vessels.

HOW DO I KNOW IF I HAVE HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE?

Symptoms of high blood pressure can include headache or flushing in the face. However, people with high blood pressure often have no symptoms at all and thus the risk factor can go undiagnosed, and untreated for years. It is important to have your blood pressure checked regularly (eg. once a year or more, depending on health status) by a health care professional and to take the necessary actions to keep your blood pressure within the normal range.

QUICK TIPS FOR LOWERING BLOOD PRESSURE

- Reduce your daily intake of sodium to no more than 2,300 mg per day - get in the habit of reading labels when consuming processed, pre-packaged foods
- Instead of buying takeout, make wholesome meals at home and take leftovers for lunch
- Maintain a healthy body weight
- Quit smoking - when it comes to smoking there is no safe amount
- Exercise at least 30 minutes a day, most days of the week
- Set aside time to relax, engage in activities like reading, deep breathing, practicing meditation, or doing yoga
- Limit your intake of alcohol - no more than 9 drinks per week for women and 14 drinks per week for men

Whether they are aware of it or not, 25% of Canadians live with high blood pressure. At each Medisys Preventive Health Assessment, blood pressure measurement is taken so that we can monitor your health and provide you the tools and tips needed to maintain a healthy life style. **Call us at 1 800 361-3793 or [click here to book your next appointment.](#)**



DANGEROUSLY GOOD!

KEEPING AN EYE ON SODIUM IN THAI FOOD

If you're looking to maintain healthy blood pressure, eating out can be tricky when so many of our favourite dishes are so high in sodium. Thai food, thanks to ingredients such as fish sauce, curry paste and shrimp paste is high among those that the sodium conscious eaters need beware!

As you may know, excess salt in the diet can increase blood pressure, an important risk factor for heart disease and stroke. And according to Health Canada, 80% of Canadians consume too much sodium (more than 2300 mg a day). Heart disease and stroke are the leading cause of death in Canada, after cancer and a healthy diet that limits daily sodium intake to 1500-2300 mg each day is key to maintaining healthy blood pressure.

When opting for Thai food, depending on what you order and how much you eat, it can be nearly impossible to keep your daily sodium consumption in check. Consider, for example, that an order of stir-fried basil chicken delivers as much as 1,400 milligrams of sodium. A meal of Tom Yum soup will cost you almost 3,000 mg of sodium.

When so many Thai dishes are fried in generous amounts of oil, it's not only sodium levels that you need to be mindful of. Calories too will sneak up on you quickly! For example, there is plenty of rich coconut milk in many curries, soups and desserts, which isn't easy on the waistline at 275 calories per half-cup. Similarly, Thai dishes specifically can be heavy on the starchy carbs and light on lean protein (think Pad Thai), which quickly bumps up the calories in a meal.

That being said, it is possible to find lighter options on a Thai menu. Smart choices include green-mango salad, grilled shrimp and chicken satay, lettuce wraps, fresh summer rolls, seafood salad (Yum Talay) and steamed shrimp salad (Yam Goong).

Hot and sour shrimp soup (Tom Yum Goong) is a calorie bargain at 90 calories per one cup, but, like all Thai soups, it's high in sodium.

Basil, cashew, ginger or mango chicken are lower in calories and smarter choices than curries made with chicken. If you don't like chicken, shrimp and tofu are also good choices. Order steamed rice instead of fried rice, coconut rice and fried noodles (or substitute the rice for bean sprouts). Watch your portion sizes, though, because calories can add up fast.

If you love Pad Thai but want to ease up on the calorie load (400 to 600 calories per serving), order it with less noodles and more bean sprouts. You can ask for it to be prepared using less oil. The same holds true for Pad See Ew, a stir-fried noodle dish made with soy sauce (sodium alert!), garlic, egg, broccoli and thinly sliced meat.

Suffering from high blood pressure or looking to maintain a healthy weight? Consult one of our Registered Dietitians and receive personalized advice based on your tastes and lifestyle.

Contact us by phone at **1 800 361-3793** or by email at **bookings@medisys.ca** to book a consultation.

SMOOTHIES: ARE THEY REALLY HEALTHY?

Do you drink a fresh fruit smoothie for breakfast every day, either homemade or bought from a juice bar? Have you ever wondered, is this really a healthy choice?

A smoothie made with whole fruit, some milk or a milk alternative (e.g. soy or almond milk), perhaps even a little

protein powder is certainly a nutritious way to start the day. When made with the right ingredients, smoothies provide fibre, protein, vitamins, minerals, antioxidants - and water - nutrients that a toasted bagel, even a whole-grain one, can't deliver.



But there are potential downsides to sipping a smoothie for breakfast. Doing so could rev up your appetite - and possibly your calorie intake - at lunch. And if you buy your smoothie from the grocery store or a juice shop, you could be getting ingredients you didn't bargain for, or need.

Blending your own smoothie is one of the easiest ways to add fruit to your diet, be it berries, cherries, mango, peaches, melon, banana, kiwi, even pear and oranges. That's a good thing for people who don't think to add fresh fruit to breakfast or snacks.

Many studies have linked a diet that includes whole fruit to a lower risk of heart attack and stroke. Fruit is a good source of many cardio-protective nutrients, such as fibre, vitamin C, folate and potassium. There's also evidence that fruit packed with flavonoids - apples, oranges, grapefruit and blueberries - may guard against ovarian cancer.

There's more to smoothies than fruit, though. They're also a vehicle for vegetables (e.g. spinach, kale, carrots), calcium (e.g. milk, yogurt, fortified plant-based beverages), omega-3 fatty acids (e.g. flax, chia and hemp seeds) and protein (milk, yogurt, protein powder). Even so, there are drawbacks to smoothies. Pulverizing whole fruit in a blender (or a Vitamix) changes the structure of the fibre which can diminish its filling factor.

One study published in the journal *Appetite* found that eating an apple before lunch did a better job of increasing satiety and reducing calorie consumption at mealtime than did eating applesauce (e.g. puréed fruit) or drinking apple juice before the meal. Drinking a fruit smoothie doesn't fill you up the same way that eating whole fruit does. Liquid meals empty from the stomach more quickly than solid foods, which can leave you feeling hungry sooner. Not to mention reduce your concentration and energy level by mid-morning.

Also, you can drink a smoothie more rapidly than the time it takes to eat, say, Greek yogurt and a cup of berries sprinkled with a tablespoon of chia seeds. Certainly quicker than the 20 minutes it takes your brain to register satiety and signal it's time to stop eating. If your go-to breakfast is a smoothie, you may need to add a mid-morning snack to prevent feeling too hungry before lunchtime - or caving in to the pastry tray served at the office morning meeting. Even so, at least you're getting heart-healthy fibre from smoothies made with whole fruit. That's not the case if you make your smoothie with fruit juice.

Fruit juice smoothies pack in more calories and (natural) sugars than those made with whole fruit. Blending one

medium orange into a smoothie adds 62 calories and 12 grams of sugar; swap the orange with one cup of orange juice and you'll add 110 calories and twice as much sugar to your drink. A recent large study from Harvard University, published in the *British Medical Journal*, found that eating more whole fruits - versus drinking fruit juice - was tied to a lower risk of developing Type 2 diabetes.

Don't assume store-bought smoothies are made from whole fruit. Bolthouse Farms Berry Boost smoothie lists apple purée concentrate and apple juice as its first two ingredients (a far cry from berries), followed by a medley of berry purées and banana purée. Read the nutrition label and you'll see there isn't a stitch of fibre to be found.

Ditto for Tim Hortons Fruit Smoothie, which is blended with real fruit purées and juices. If you order the large (684 ml), however, you will get one gram of fibre. Big whoop. Depending on what you order at the smoothie bar, you could also be getting refined sugars. Booster Juice's Ripped Berry smoothie, for instance, is made with sugary frozen vanilla yogurt and honey.

THE BOTTOM LINE:

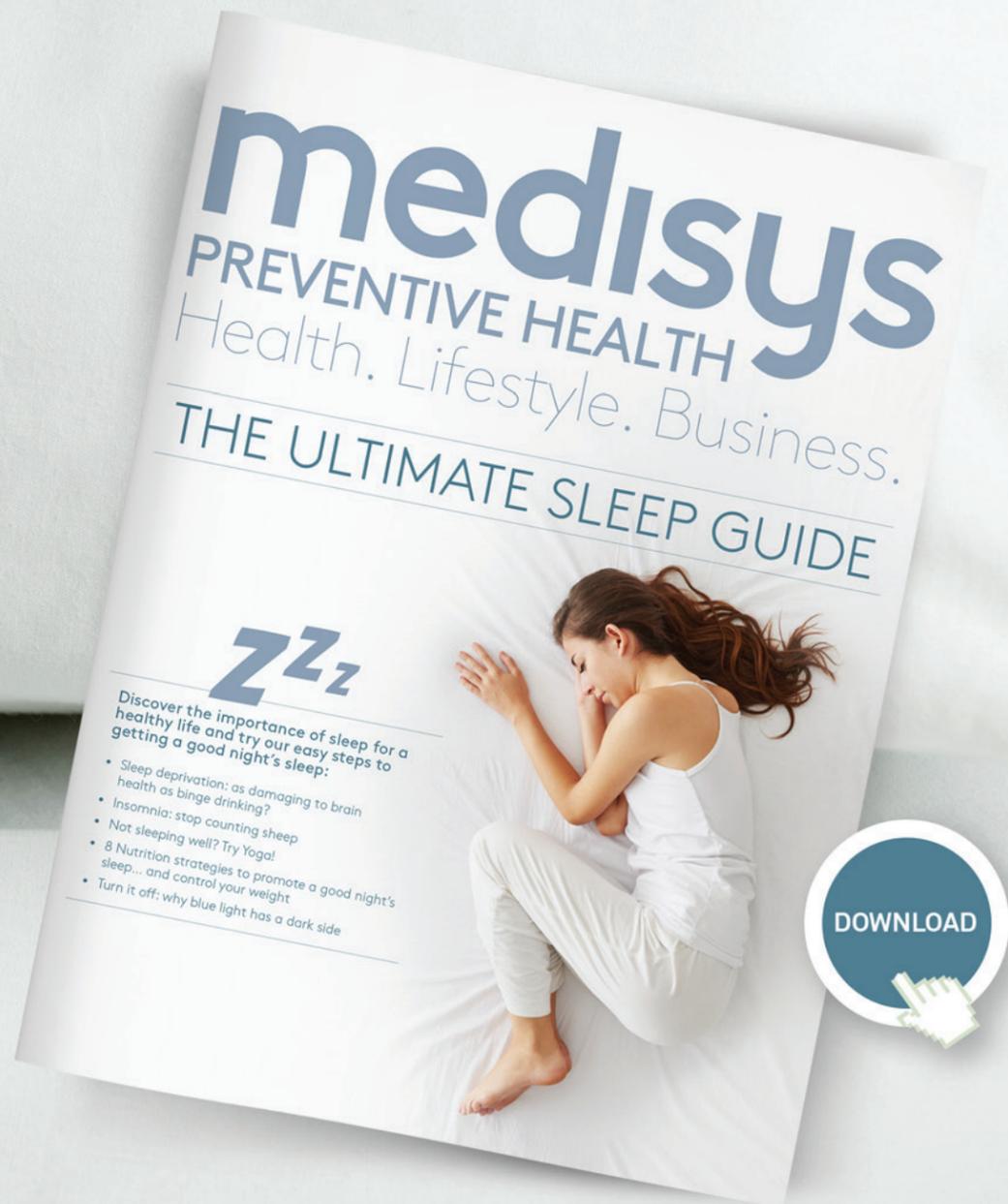
“ **A smoothie made with whole fruit - and other healthy ingredients in measured amounts - is a healthy way to start the day. Just be sure to pack a mid-morning snack to avert hunger pangs!** ”

Large portion sizes of juice bar smoothies can contribute excess calories too. A 24-ounce Booster Juice Funky Monkey smoothie (banana, chocolate almond milk, vanilla frozen yogurt) serves up 488 calories. Okay for a meal, but pretty hefty if your smoothie is a between-meal snack.

Even if you blend your smoothie from scratch, you could be unknowingly piling on calories. A tablespoon each of flax, chia and hemp seeds and agave syrup (or honey) adds a solid 200 calories. Factor in the fruit, milk and protein powder and your healthy shake can cost you upward of 600 calories, roughly the same as a McDonald's Big Mac. A homemade smoothie is clearly more nutritious than an all-dressed burger, but smoothies have a health halo that can blind people to the extra calories - or sugar - they deliver.

1 IN 3 CANADIANS ARE CHRONICALLY SLEEP DEPRIVED.

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DISCOVER EASY TIPS TO IMPROVE SLEEP HEALTH.



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YOUR MEDISYS FAMILY.**

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