

HEALTH Matters

Lifestyle 

When Being on a 'High' is Not Advisable

'High Blood Pressure' (High BP) - a condition that has become all too common; so common that we no longer take it seriously.

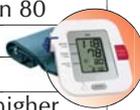
High BP - The Silent Killer

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), one out of every three adults is affected by high BP. This 'Silent Killer' shows no signs or symptoms, which makes it all the more dangerous. In fact, it has become such an important issue that this year's theme for World Health Day (7th April) is high BP.

Categories of blood pressure

Based on the readings, blood pressure is categorised into four different types:

Category	Systolic reading (top number)		Diastolic reading (bottom number)
Normal	Less than 120	and	Less than 80
Prehypertension	120-139	or	80-89
Stage 1 Hypertension	140-159	or	90-99
Stage 2 Hypertension	160 or higher	or	100 or higher



- **Eat healthy** - A healthy and balanced diet helps reduce BP. Have less salt, more fruits, vegetables, low-fat dairy and whole grains daily.
- **Limit your alcohol intake** - Alcohol raises the BP. Drink if you like, but exercise control. Ideally you should avoid it.
- **Reduce your salt intake** - A teaspoon of salt a day (2,300 mg) is appropriate for healthy people. Whereas 1,500 mg a day is recommended for those over 51 years of age. Be watchful of the amount consumed through processed and packaged foods.
- **Manage your stress** - Regular quality sleep, deep breathing, muscle relaxation are some healthy methods to cope with stress.
- **Control smoking** - Although smoking doesn't directly cause high BP, it raises the risk of developing heart disease.
- **Self-monitor your BP** - Keep a close check on your BP by monitoring it at home or regularly visiting the nearest clinic.

How can we prevent this?

Reducing your blood pressure helps avoid strokes, heart attacks or other serious health complications. Here are some simple lifestyle changes you could make in your daily routine to control and prevent high BP.

Keep a check on your blood pressure:

- **Maintain a healthy weight** - Obesity increases your risk of high BP; even a few kilograms of weight loss can make a big difference.
- **Keep fit, exercise** - Regular physical activity lowers your BP and controls your weight. Aim for 30 minutes of exercises every day.

A healthy diet, exercise and reduced salt intake; make these 3 simple steps your first line of defence in keeping blood pressure within control. Let a healthy lifestyle be the 'high' in your life!



Editor speak

Welcome to Health Matters. We thank you for your overwhelming response to the newsletter that constantly motivates us to deliver quality service to our customers like you.

This issue kicks-off creating awareness on 'High Blood Pressure' - this year's theme for World Health Day (7th April). Since lifestyle factors play a major role in altering blood pressure, modifying them is one of the simplest and most inexpensive ways of controlling it.

Zumba is a cheerful solution for all those who groan and curse about exercising. It adds fun and frolic into the everyday regimen and makes you forget that you're exercising!

Stress is an unavoidable modern companion born because of our increasingly demanding lifestyles. Early identification of stress indicators helps one cope and prevent the adoption of unhealthy ways to deal with it, such as drinking or smoking.

Irritable bowel syndrome is a common disorder that manifests into abdominal discomfort, bloating, diarrhea and/or constipation. Food is often the culprit; and here are some simple dietary changes so that you'll enjoy your meal.

Please write to us with feedback and suggestions about the newsletter at editorial@vidalhealth.com



Dance to an Old Beat with New Moves



It's 8:00 p.m. The music, loud and the Latin beat, hot. The laughter reminds you of a party you attended last week. When you take a look however there is no beer, no chips and dip, but there is dancing – in exercise sweats and shoes. This is worth checking out; the latest fad in staying fit - welcome to the world of Zumba.

Zumba is the brainchild of dance mastermind Beto Perez, who added fun and frolic into exercising, choreographed and injected a healthy dose of Latin dance rhythms into physical training. So even a rigorous exercise feels like a great night out.

Fun, frolic and fitness

You don't have to be Jennifer Lopez or Shakira to move your hips Zumba style. Zumba is hit today because of its simplicity, ease and the fun it brings! Moves from Latin dances, such as cha cha cha, salsa and mambo are also included by some instructors. Dancers and non-dancers, the young and old, the fit and fat can all enjoy Zumba in a comfortable pair of dancing shoes or running shoes. All of this is a recipe for a workout regimen that makes you forget that you are, in fact, exercising!

Move it, shake it, exercise it

More than four million people worldwide enjoy the many benefits of Zumba. So come join the party!

How to move it

There are ways in which you can incorporate some moving it, shaking it and working it into your everyday life.

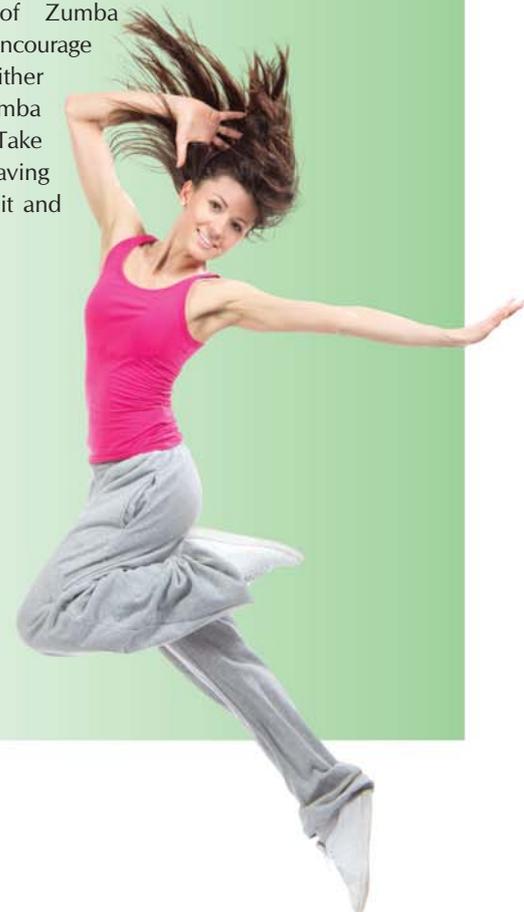
As they say two is a party, so joining a Zumba class is a great place to begin. While in class, don't fret about the others' expert levels. Just let your hair down and enjoy the music!

You can break into some Zumba moves even at home. Zumba dancing DVDs are easily available at stores and some sets come with six different workouts. If doing it alone results in your motivational levels dropping, invite some friends over and make it a party!

Experts advice that your workout plan includes mandatory Zumba dancing twice a week, one cardiovascular activity on a third day and strength training in the remaining two days of your five-days-a-week workout plan. This variety will keep the monotony of exercising far, far away.

Zumba dancing common faces

The popularity of Zumba has even infected a number of popular celebrities. Martial arts expert and action film star Jackie Chan easily busts some Zumba moves and giving him company are Spice Girl – Victoria Beckham, Oscar-award winning actress – Natalie Portman, yesteryear star – Kirstie Alley, and our own Bollywood star Neha Dhupia. Hope this impressive list of Zumba practitioners will encourage you to move it, either at home to a Zumba DVD or in a class! Take to it and keep having fun while moving it and shaking it!



Loose it: The main reason people flock to Zumba classes is because it helps you shed many kilos while dancing away! Zumba, a cardiovascular exercise, causes the weighing scale to tip in your favour.



Improve it: The workout also improves your cardiovascular health, thus reducing your risk of heart attack. To leverage this Zumba benefit, try to infuse at least 30 minutes of its moves, five days a week.



Coordinate it: A decreased sense of coordination results in falls and injuries in older people. Zumba moves improve your coordination which is very vital as you grow older.



In the mood for it: Last but not the least, Zumba puts you in a good mood. Exercising releases our body's 'happy hormone' - endorphins. So it's a great way to keep the blues away for people prone to depression.



Time to Unwind



Managing stress

Feeling overwhelmed, irritable and anxious? Feel like you're juggling one too many things? Don't want to get out of bed and face the day? This might just be thanks to a bad day, but it doesn't mean you ignore the signs. This could be the first sign of stress.

Stress, that ubiquitous modern companion, is bred by our increasingly demanding lifestyles. At times it is unavoidable, but the more important question is - what is to be done should the stress become unbearable?

Stress is the feeling of being under large amounts of mental or emotional pressure. When pressure associated with a particular situation or everyday activities becomes too much for an individual to cope with is when it turns into stress.

Most of us don't consider stress to be an illness, but it significantly features in how we behave, feel and think. It can even affect our body's day-to-day functioning.

Are you stressed?

While stress itself is not a disease it could cause serious health conditions if not tackled in time. Early identification of the symptoms not only helps one cope with stress, it also prevents dealing with it in unhealthy ways, such as drinking or smoking. Recognition of stress pointers also helps prevent escalation and potentially serious complications, high blood pressure, anxiety and depression to name a few.

Listed below is a quick reckoner to signal the presence of stress.

Behavioral indicators

- A feeling of resentment regarding situations or people
- Lack of attention towards oneself, ignoring personal care
- Isolation, avoiding social situations and gatherings
- Staying in bed all day

Physical signs

- Insomnia
- Lethargy and fatigue
- A noticeable change in eating habits, either a loss of appetite or eating too much
- Excessive drinking and smoking (both very addictive)
- High blood pressure



Emotional indicators

- Frustration
- Crying and depression
- Mood swings
- Anger



Psychological signs

- A negative attitude towards everything
- Low self esteem and a feeling of failure
- Fear of interacting with people
- A feeling of hopelessness



Most people experience a combination of these symptoms and it might be good to note that stress affects people differently.

While you can't completely avoid stress, you can minimize its effects by changing how you choose to respond to it. Daily practice, conscious effort and discipline can control unwanted stress.

Attitude

If you can't change the situation then try changing your approach to it. Be willing to be flexible.

- **Recognize when you don't have control and let it go.**
- **Take control of your own reactions.**
- **Set realistic goals.**

Relax and recharge

Take 10-15 minutes out in a day to relax or do something you love.

Learn how to relax

Relaxation, such as deep breathing, can help you calm down and relieve the stress.

Talk to someone

Just talking to someone is helpful and could help you resolve your issues.

Take control

Find solutions to your problems - it will help you feel more in control.

The American Heart Association provides quick tips that you can adopt as 'emergency stress stoppers'. Practise them whenever you feel under pressure and deflate the situation before it escalates.

- Go for a walk
- Count to 10 before you speak
- Take three to five deep breaths
- Avoid the stressful situation and say you'll handle it later
- Don't be afraid to say "I'm sorry" if you make a mistake
- Set your watch 5 to 10 minutes ahead to avoid the stress of being late
- Break down big problems into smaller parts
- Drive in the slow lane or avoid busy roads to help you stay calm while driving
- Smell a rose, hug a loved one or smile at your neighbour

Take a little time to unwind, adopt simple changes in your daily routine and the reward for your efforts could well be a healthy, balanced life with time for work, relationships, relaxation and fun.





A Disrupted Daily Routine

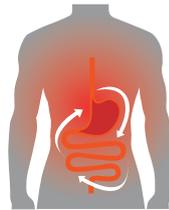


Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) is a common disorder that affects the digestive system. IBS is not a disease but a group of symptoms, including abdominal discomfort, diarrhoea, and/or constipation. If these symptoms occur at least thrice a month for a continuous period of three months and there are no signs of disease or injury, it could be a case of IBS.

Managing the discomfort

Doctors usually employ a combination of solutions to manage IBS.

- Adopting nutritional habits
- Inclusion of probiotics
- Prescribing medication
- Therapy for mental health



Making a start

Wind, bloating, diarrhoea and constipation are the most common symptoms of IBS and food is often the culprit. Given below are some dietary suggestions to help keep IBS in check:

Smaller the better: Eat small portions of food and chew your food approximately 20 times as it reduces fermentation in the bowel and decreases gas.

Say no to problem foods: Reduce the consumption of resistant starches as they're tough to digest and remain in the bowel to ferment and produce gas. These include: whole grains, sweet corn, pulses, green bananas, muesli with bran, manufactured cakes, biscuits or processed foods, fatty food such as chips, burgers, pizza, garlic bread and fast food.



Maintain a food and symptom diary to trace effects of food on your system.

Drink to good health: Replenish lost fluids by drinking at least eight cups of water per day. Limit intake of alcohol.

Grab a bite of wellness: Add oats and golden linseed to your diet as they are good sources of soluble fibre which softens stools, making it easier to pass. Gradually increase the intake of fibre as sudden increase could aggravate the symptoms.

Stay away from dairy products and fruits: If you completely eliminate dairy products from your diet then make sure you get sufficient protein and calcium from other sources. Limit the intake of fruits to just three portions a day (including not more than one portion of dry fruits). Fruit juice can be restricted to one small glass per day.

Include probiotics: Probiotics are said to contain 'friendly bacteria' that destroys 'bad bacteria', thus improving your digestive health. In case you decide to try probiotics make sure to read accompanying instructions and dosage recommendations.

How does one 'cure' a disorder? The answer is probably right under your nose, on your plate. A little awareness and some lifestyle alterations could help you enjoy and looking forward to the gratification your meal brings.

Quiz - Fill in the blanks

1. The appropriate amount of salt consumption per day for otherwise healthy people aged less than 51 years should not be more than.....mg.
2. Zumba is known to improve..... which is very important, especially as you grow older, to prevent falls and injuries.
3. Anger, mood swings and crying are some of the indicators of stress.
4. A person suffering from IBS should reduce the consumption of as these are not fully digested by the body and remain in the bowel to ferment and produce gas.

E-mail your answers to: healthmatters@vidalhealth.com