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## **It's Just High Blood Pressure**

*Shopping in the health food section is like going to another country*

By Kat Avila | Web Published 4.27.2005

My new dentist told me they wouldn't even clean my teeth until I got an okay from my doctor. Since when did dentists start taking blood pressure readings? So, it was my dentist who was the first to inform me that my borderline hypertension had finally crossed over into the red zone.

My new doctor confirmed it. (Since I don't have a car, I had to find a new dentist and doctor within walking distance of where I live.) My systolic (the top number) is about 150-160 and the diastolic (the bottom number) is about 100-110. The jump in my diastolic pressure was what surprised me, though according to an American Society of Hypertension patient info guide this is not unexpected for older hypertensives. And my having high blood pressure is fairly predictable given that my father had it and my mother has it.

Dr. Gomez tells me I need to make some basic lifestyle changes, including exercising more and eating more intelligently. Three years ago I was doing a half-marathon every month, not quickly but I could do it. Now, I'm too tired to exercise much since I work two



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I whine to my younger sister about how I have to work both jobs the following Sunday, one job from 10:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and the other from 9:00 p.m. to maybe 11:00 or 12 midnight for a once-a-month merchandise meeting.

ME: I don't have time to exercise. I'm too tired. [SFX: More whining.]

SISTER: But it's only for 30 minutes.

ME: It's hard when you have to work two jobs.

SISTER: Good. Because if you have to work, you won't sit around eating.

ME: Oh.

A co-worker asked me how my sister responded when I told her my blood pressure reading.

ME: The reading was 160/106.

SISTER: That could kill you. [At this point, she started going on and on about how her boss's father was probably going to die in the hospital because everyone knows they experiment on old people since if an old person dies no one will think it's from the treatment but from advanced age, blah blah blah.]

ME: (feeling a little miffed about not getting more sympathy)

Shopping in the health food section of the supermarket is like going to another country. The other day I was throwing into my basket foreign things like rice cakes, soy smoothies, and tofu hot dogs. Still probably sounds

like junk food to you, but this stuff is a more healthy substitute, though I dumped the organic cookies at work because I didn't like how they tasted.

Eventually I hope I can bring down my blood pressure a little so I can finally get my teeth cleaned.

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