

## Treating high blood pressure without medication

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Exercise, weight loss and targeted yoga exercises: it doesn't take much else to keep your tension under control.

Marie-Jeanne has been practicing yoga on a weekly basis for years. She has just turned 60 years old and her slight overweight has never been a problem for her. She is supple, unfettered and always in a good mood. She wishes to see me because her general physician has found her blood pressure was too high. "I am really disappointed," she says, "because I thought that with yoga I avoid what affects, it is true, my parents and my brother!" As a preamble, I explain to her that all the studies show that there are two essential things to lower blood pressure: diet and physical activity.

"First of all, let's see how much salt you consume, because it's the primary cause of high blood pressure". The list is a long one: cheese, bread, pastries, ready-made meals. Until then, she hadn't paid any attention to it, Marie-Jeanne thought that eating organic would be enough. "And what's more," I told her, "you don't consume enough foods that provide potassium, as that is what is crucial, the balance between the potassium provided by vegetables and the sodium provided by everything that is added in the meals."

But the second point is equally important. "What activity do you do outside of yoga?" Marie-Jeanne tells me that she walks every Sunday, she swims in the summer and skis in the winter. That's a good average, but in her case it is not enough. "You have to do 30 minutes of activity every day. You'll start with gentle Salutations to the sun. You'll start with three Salutations, gradually increasing to 12. Then you will continue with standing postures such as the angle and the triangle to strengthen muscle, cardiac and respiratory endurance. You should quickly progress to half an hour each day. You will also practice inverted postures: forward fold, downward facing dog, and shoulderstand postures. These postures, by a reflex phenomenon, will make you lower the pressure". While continuing my consultation, I also discovered that Marie-Jeanne has a bad sleep, with nocturnal awakenings and especially sleep apnea.

On this basis, I tell her she needs to lose weight and tone herself. She must reduce her carbohydrate intake and practice the supported shoulderstand posture (Sarvangasana) at home in the evening to relax, but also to strengthen the neck muscles and the whole connective tissue, including the pharynx. She must eliminate all drinks with alcohol, including wine, after 7pm.

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Indeed, even one glass of wine significantly increases sleep apnea. I also advise her to take short breaks during the day to focus on the here and now. For example, she can activate gentle breathing in Ujjayi with a small associated sankalpa. When breathing in, one imagines a serene sky and mentally repeats to oneself, "I take serenity". On exhalation, we imagine distributing this energy in our body by repeating, "I install serenity in my body and my heart".

Marie-Jeanne was very motivated and followed my instructions scrupulously. She quickly lost weight by limiting carbohydrates, cheeses and bread, increasing vegetables, and eliminating table salt and the glass of wine in the evening. After two weeks, her blood pressure had already dropped by almost two points of maximum and one point of minimum! After two months and some five kilos less, the sleep apnea disappeared. To this day, Marie-Jeanne is still not taking any anti-hypertensive treatment given her normalized blood pressure.

## The practice

For the Salutations to the sun, please refer yourself to our special edition n°3, *Salutations*.



### Posture n°1

Standing, feet hip-width apart, inhale with your arms in a cross. Exhale on your side, suspending your breath for a few moments. Inhale as you come back to center. Exhale to the other side. Hold your breath for a few moments. Inhale to come back to center.



**Posture n°2**

Exhale while pulling your arms back and intertwining your hands behind your back in yoni mudra. Inhale in this posture by pulling your shoulders back and keeping your arms lifted. Exhale while bending forwards and pushing your buttocks back. Inhale to come back up.



**Posture n°3**

Turn to your left. Exhale while bending over to your left side, your back flat and legs straight. Inhale while coming back up and facing your left leg. Suspend your breath while rotating over your right leg. Exhale while bending over to your left side, your back flat and legs straight. Inhale to come back up and to your center. Exhale by bending forward in your center, your back flat. Stay in this posture for 2 breaths, then come back up.



**Posture n°4**

Relax your arms, stay upside down and release your whole body. Slowly come back up on a first inhale, leaving your head tilted forward, exhale in the posture. Raise your head on a second inhale. Repeat the whole exercise a second time.



**Posture n°5 • Downward facing dog**

Come down on your knees, sit on your heels. Place your hands on each side of your knees and breathe in. Exhale as you slide your hands forwards on the floor and stretch your back. Inhale into the posture. Exhale and raise the pelvis by pushing firmly on your hands and arms. Make sure the neck and face are relaxed. After a few breaths (increase from 4 to 12), inhale by bending your legs and resting your forehead on the ground with your toes out. Exhale into the posture. Inhale as you sit upright.



**Posture n°6 • Supported shoulderstand**

Lie down on your back. On an inhale, raise your legs vertically. Place your hands on your back to support and straighten it. Relax your ankles and legs. Breathe soothingly in Ujjayi. Stay in the 12-breath posture. Then bend your legs, knees on your forehead. Stretch out your arms and come back in a tightly bundled posture to relieve the lower back.



**Ujjayi breath**

In the sitting posture on the knees or cross-legged, install the Ujjayi breathing practice. Breathe with your mouth open while making a silent "A" on both the inhalation and exhalation. Breathe deeply and slowly. Then while continuing to make the same noise with the back of the throat, close the mouth. Continue to breathe with this Ujjayi breath, making a soft, gentle sound, a slight hiss. Let yourself be lulled by this auditory massage. Practice 12 breaths in this way, then add a sankalpa : on an inhale, mentally repeat: "I take the calm and soothed energy of a serene sky" and on an exhale, mentally repeat: "I am serene and soothed".