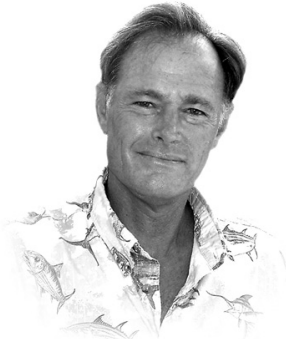


AND NOW A WORD FROM THE DOCTOR...

Blood Pressure and Brain Health

By David Perlmutter, MD, FACN



Everyone seems quite aware that elevation of blood pressure is an important risk factor for heart disease, but new research reveals that this all too common medical problem also increases a person's risk for declining mental function.

As reported recently in the journal *Archives of Neurology*, researchers at the Columbia University Medical Center studied 918 individuals aged 65 or older over a five-year period. All of the participants demonstrated normal mental function at the beginning of the study, but by the end of the five-year period, 334 of them showed signs of early dementia. Further, there was a strong relationship between the risk of failing mental function and elevation of blood pressure.

The exact mechanism relating high blood pressure to the decreased mental function remains unclear, but the authors speculated that high blood pressure could affect the brain by causing small strokes as well as inducing the production of damaging chemicals called free radicals. But regardless of the exact mechanism, the results of this and other similar reports is clear. High blood pressure is just plain bad for the brain.

Make sure, then, to get your blood pressure checked regularly. If your doctor recommends medication, understand that this treatment is certainly good for your heart and blood vessels and likely will help preserve brain function as well. And finally, keep in mind that lifestyle factors like exercise, diet, stress reduction, and adequate sleep are not only directly beneficial for brain health, but also helpful for the brain by lowering blood pressure.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David".