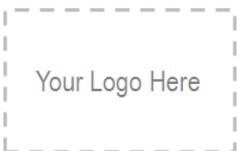




# High Blood Pressure: What You Need to Know



This brochure can help you learn more about high blood pressure. It doesn't replace regular medical check-ups or your health care provider's advice. Talk with your health care provider about what your blood pressure should be.

# High Blood Pressure

## INTRODUCTION

High blood pressure, also called "hypertension" (hi-per-TEN-shen), is very common. A person can have high blood pressure for years without knowing it. You may not feel any different when you have high blood pressure. If it is not treated, it can lead to heart attack, stroke, kidney failure, or vision problems. The **good news** is that high blood pressure **can be controlled**. The best way to find out if you have high blood pressure is to have it checked by your health care provider. When your blood pressure is under control, you can lower your risk of serious problems.

## WHAT IS BLOOD PRESSURE?

Blood pressure is the force that pushes blood from the heart through the veins and arteries in your body. Blood pressure is measured as two numbers, one over the other. The first or top number is called "systolic" (sis-TOL-ick) pressure, for example, **118/78**. This number is the pressure when the heart is pumping blood in full force. The second or bottom number is called "diastolic" (DYE-a-STOL-ick) pressure, for example, 118/**78**. This is the pressure when your heart is relaxing between beats. The ideal blood pressure is less than 120/80, which is best for heart health. You will hear "120/80" said as "120 over 80."

## HOW DO YOU KNOW IF YOU HAVE HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE?

High blood pressure means the heart is working too hard to push blood through the body. A blood pressure of **140/90** or higher is considered **high**. If your blood pressure is between 120/80 mmHg and 139/89 mmHg, you have **pre-hypertension**. This means that you don't have high blood pressure now. But, you may develop it in the future. The numbers below can help you know what your blood pressure numbers should be for good health. Talk to your health care provider about what is a good blood pressure **for you**.

Level	Systolic		Diastolic	What does it mean for you?
<b>Normal Blood Pressure</b>	Less than 120*	AND	Less than 80	<b>Right on target.</b> Keep it there.
<b>Pre-hypertension</b>	120 to 139	OR	80 to 89	<b>You are at risk</b> for getting high blood pressure. Talk to your health care provider about ways to lower your blood pressure.
<b>High Blood Pressure</b>	140 or higher	OR	90 or higher	If you have more than 1 reading at this level, you <b>may have</b> high blood pressure. See your health care provider for treatment options.

\*If you have kidney or heart disease your blood pressure goal is less than 130/80.



## Take Steps Today to Stay Healthy

### 3 Things You Can Do

- 1  Plan to get your blood pressure checked.
- 2  Ask **how often** you need to get it checked: Every: \_\_\_\_\_
- 3  Write down your blood pressure **goal**: \_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_

# What Are the Risk Factors for High Blood Pressure?

There are certain risk factors that can make you more likely to develop high blood pressure. You can control some of the risks—and others you can't.

**Focusing on the risks you *can* control is very important. Doing this can also improve your health in general.**

## Risk factors you *CAN'T* control

<b>Gender</b>	Men tend to get high blood pressure at a younger age than women.
<b>Family History</b>	High blood pressure can run in families. If you have a close family member who has high blood pressure, then you are at higher risk for getting the condition.
<b>Race and Ethnicity</b>	African Americans and people of Hispanic descent are at greater risk for getting high blood pressure.
<b>Age</b>	Blood pressure risk increases as people get older.

## Risk factors for getting high blood pressure that you *CAN* control



<b>Eating too much salt (sodium)</b>	<b>Too much salt</b> in your diet can cause your body to keep more fluid. This can raise your blood pressure. Limit the total salt in your food to <b>no more than 1500 mg per day</b> .
<b>Drinking too much alcohol</b>	Over time, <b>too much alcohol</b> can damage your heart. Try drinking <b>no more than 2 drinks</b> a day if you are a <b>man</b> or <b>1 drink</b> a day if you are a <b>woman</b> .
<b>Being overweight</b>	<b>Too much weight</b> can make your heart work too hard. As weight increases, your blood pressure will likely rise as well. A body mass index ("BMI") of 25-30 means you are overweight. Higher than 30 means you are obese. If you are a person who is overweight by 60 pounds or more, losing as <b>little as 10-20 pounds</b> can help to lower your blood pressure.
<b>Not enough exercise</b>	<b>Exercise is good for your heart</b> and can help control your weight and stress levels. Doing moderate to vigorous exercise at least <b>2½ hours a week</b> (30 minutes, 5 times a week) is <b>great</b> for your health.
<b>Smoking</b>	<b>Smoking can raise your blood pressure</b> . It can harm how your heart and blood vessels work. There are several ways to help you quit. If you smoke, talk to your health care provider about <b>ways to quit</b> .
<b>Too much stress</b>	<b>How you deal with stress may impact</b> your other risk factors for high blood pressure such as eating too much, drinking too much alcohol, or smoking. <b>Reducing stress</b> in your life is <b>great</b> for your health.

*Even though you can't control some risk factors, there are still many you can control. Talk to your health care team to find ways to decrease your risk.*

# How to Reach Your Blood Pressure Goals

There are things you can do to lower your blood pressure.

Following these steps can be good for your health—even if you *don't* have high blood pressure now.

- **Stop Smoking**—Talk with your health care provider about programs, products, and medicines that can help you quit smoking. Avoid being around people who are smoking. If you have trouble quitting smoking on your own, consider joining a support group. Many hospitals, workplaces, and community groups offer classes to help people quit smoking.
- **Stay Active**—Routine exercise can lower high blood pressure. Talk with your health care provider before you increase or start a new exercise plan. Ask how much and what kinds of exercise are safe for you. If possible, do some kind of moderate to vigorous exercise at least 2½ hours a week or 30 minutes, 5 times a week. Some ways to exercise are brisk walking, jogging, and fitness classes.
- **Eat Healthy**—Your health care provider may recommend the D.A.S.H. (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) eating plan if you have high blood pressure. The DASH eating plan includes fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and other foods that are heart healthy and low in fat, cholesterol, and salt (sodium).
- **Get To and Keep a Healthy Weight**—If you are overweight or obese, try to reduce your weight by 5 to 10 percent. To lose weight, cut back on calories and try to get more exercise. Eat smaller portions and choose lower-calorie foods. If you are having difficulty losing weight, talk to your health care team for more tips.
- **Limit Alcohol**—Men should limit alcohol intake to 2 alcoholic drinks a day. Women should limit alcohol intake to 1 alcoholic drink a day. Examples of 1 alcoholic drink are: a 12-ounce beer, a 4-ounce glass of wine, 1.5 ounces of 80-proof liquor, or 1 ounce of hard liquor (100-proof).
- **Decrease Stress**—Learning how to manage stress, relax, and cope with problems can improve your emotional and physical health.
- **Know Your Numbers**—If you can, take your blood pressure at home. You can get a blood pressure cuff (a device used to take blood pressure) from your local pharmacy or grocery store. Keep a record of the readings you get and share them with your health care provider.

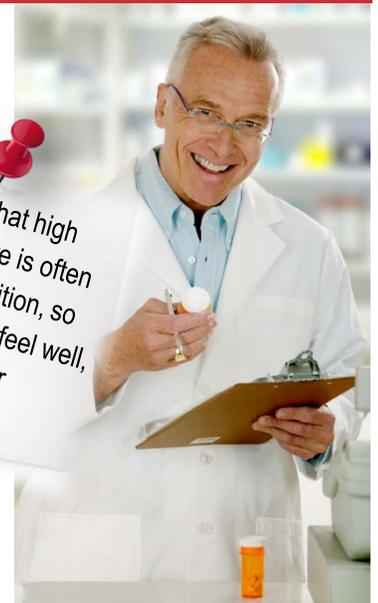
Taking medicines as prescribed can also help you keep a healthy blood pressure



Many medicines treat high blood pressure. Your health care provider might have you take 1 or more medicines if you have high blood pressure. **Here's what to do to make sure blood pressure medicines work best for you:**

- ✓ Take them as directed
- ✓ Take them even if you do not think they are working
- ✓ Take them even if you do not feel sick
- ✓ Tell your health care provider about any side effects or other concerns
- ✓ Tell your health care provider or pharmacist if you start taking any other prescriptions or over-the-counter medicines or dietary supplements
- ✓ Tell your health care provider if you can't pay for your medicine

Remember that high blood pressure is often a lifelong condition, so even when you feel well, **keep taking** your medicine.





## ... To Make Sure You Take Your Blood Pressure Medicine *Every Day*

- **Write it down.**

Make a wall chart with the names of your medicines, the dose, and the time of day you need to take them.
- **Get a pill box.**

Get a pill box that has the days of the week and times of day. You can get these boxes from your pharmacy or local grocery store.

Fill the box at the beginning of the week to help you keep track.

Ask a friend or family member to check the box so that you know each medicine is in the right place.
- **Set an alarm.**

Set an alarm on your clock or cell phone to remind you if a medicine has to be taken at a certain time.
- **Ask for help.**

Tell family and friends about your medicine schedule so they can help remind you.
- **Set a daily routine.**

Combine taking your medicines with something you do at regular times. For example, when you brush your teeth, eat breakfast or dinner. This way, taking your medicines at the right time can become a good habit.
- **Take it with you.**

Remember to take your medicines with you when you are away from home. Bring enough medicines with you when you go on trips. Always put them in your carry-on luggage.
- **Refill your prescriptions on time.**

Reorder your prescriptions ahead of time to make sure that you never run out.

# Action Plan for High Blood Pressure



✓ Check off items from the list below that you will be able to change or improve. Or you can write in your own action items.

## Be active each day. Always check with your health care provider before starting any new exercise program.

- Find something you like to do most days of the week for at least half an hour. Try swimming, walking, dancing, or taking a fitness class. Then do it!
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Park your car a few blocks away or get off the bus a few stops earlier.

## Take your blood pressure medications.

- Take your medications the right way, each day, as your health care provider prescribed.
- Keep taking your medications unless your health care provider tells you to stop.

*"I made up my mind. I set a quit date and threw out my cigarettes. It was tough at first, but I did it. Guess what? My blood pressure is lower."*

## Skip the salt.

- Use less salt when you cook and don't add salt to your meals. Add spices, herbs, or lemon for flavor.
- Check the labels when you buy prepared foods, such as snacks, canned foods, or frozen dinners. Pick foods that say "low salt" or "reduced sodium."



## Cut back on alcohol.

- Alcohol raises blood pressure. If you do drink, limit your alcohol to 1 drink per day or less.
- Drink more water, diet soda, or seltzer.

## Aim for a healthy weight.

- Eat foods that are lower in fat and calories.
- Lose weight slowly if you are overweight. Lose about 1 to 2 pounds a week. Talk with your health care provider about a weight goal and weight loss program that's right for you.

## Quit smoking.

- Ask your health care provider for tips to quit smoking. Then, set a date to quit.

## Other

1. Are the items that you have chosen achievable?  Yes  No

2. What will you do to make these changes? \_\_\_\_\_

3. When will you make these changes? \_\_\_\_\_

