



Controlling High Blood Pressure

High blood pressure (hypertension) is often called the silent killer. This is because many people who have it, don't know it. It can be very dangerous. High blood pressure can raise your risk of heart attack, stroke, heart disease, and heart failure. Controlling your blood pressure can decrease your risk of these problems. It's important to know the appropriate blood pressure range and remember to check your blood pressure regularly. Doing so can save your life.

Blood pressure measurements are given as 2 numbers. Systolic blood pressure is the upper number. This is the pressure when the heart contracts. Diastolic blood pressure is the lower number. This is the pressure when the heart relaxes between beats.

Blood pressure is categorized as normal, elevated, or stage 1 or stage 2 high blood pressure:

- Normal blood pressure is systolic of less than 120 and diastolic of less than 80 (120/80)
- Elevated blood pressure is systolic of 120 to 129 **and** diastolic less than 80
- Stage 1 high blood pressure is systolic of 130 to 139 **or** diastolic between 80 to 89
- Stage 2 high blood pressure is when systolic is 140 or higher **or** the diastolic is 90 or higher
- A heart-healthy lifestyle can help you control your blood pressure without medicines.

Here are some things you can do to pursue a heart-healthy lifestyle:

Choose heart-healthy foods

- Select low-salt, low-fat foods. Limit sodium intake to 2,400 mg per day or the amount suggested by your healthcare provider.
- Limit canned, dried, cured, packaged, and fast foods. These can contain a lot of salt.
- Eat 8 to 10 servings of fruits and vegetables every day.
- Choose lean meats, fish, or chicken.
- Eat whole-grain pasta, brown rice, and beans.
- Eat 2 to 3 servings of low-fat or fat-free dairy products.
- Ask your doctor about the DASH eating plan. This plan helps reduce blood pressure.
- When you go to a restaurant, ask that your meal be prepared with no added salt.



Stay at a healthy weight

- Ask your healthcare provider how many calories to eat a day. Then stick to that number.
- Ask your healthcare provider what weight range is healthiest for you. If you are overweight, a weight loss of only 3% to 5% of your body weight can help lower blood pressure. Generally, a good weight loss goal is to lose 10% of your body weight in a year.
- Limit snacks and sweets.
- Get regular exercise.

Get up and get active

- Find activities you enjoy that can be done alone or with friends or family. Such activities might include bicycling, dancing, walking, or jogging.
- Park farther away from building entrances to walk more.
- Use stairs instead of the elevator.
- When you can, walk or bike instead of driving.
- Rake leaves, garden, or do household repairs.
- Be active at a moderate to vigorous level of physical activity for at least 40 minutes for a minimum of 3 to 4 days a week.

Manage stress

- Make time to relax and enjoy life. Find time to laugh.
- Communicate your concerns with your loved ones and your healthcare provider.
- Visit with family and friends, and keep up with hobbies.

Limit alcohol and quit smoking

- Men should have no more than 2 drinks per day.
- Women should have no more than 1 drink per day.
- Talk with your healthcare provider about quitting smoking. Smoking significantly increases your risk for heart disease and stroke. Ask your healthcare provider about community smoking cessation programs and other options.

Medicines

If lifestyle changes aren't enough, your healthcare provider may prescribe high blood pressure medicine. Take all medicines as prescribed. If you have any questions about your medicines, ask your healthcare provider before stopping or changing them.

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1-866-946-4458 (TTY 711)

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