

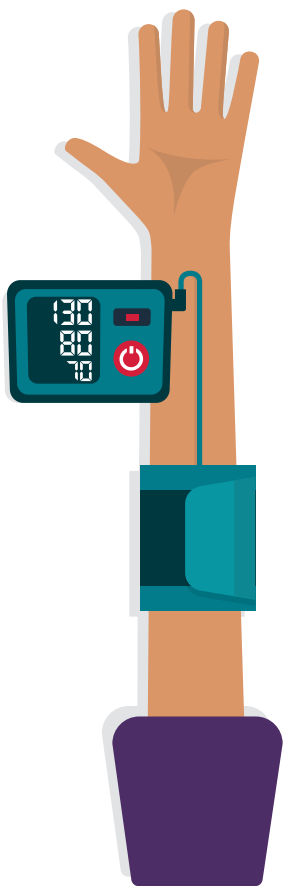
# Healthy Blood Pressure for Healthy Hearts

## Small Steps To Take Control



Every time your heart beats, it pumps blood through vessels, called arteries, to the rest of your body. Your blood pressure is how hard your blood pushes against the walls of the arteries. If your blood flows at higher than normal pressures, you may have high blood pressure, also known as hypertension.

High blood pressure is a major risk factor for heart disease, which is the leading cause of death in the United States. Millions of Americans have high blood pressure, but many people who have it don't know it. That's why it is important to have your blood pressure checked at least once a year.



### High blood pressure is a "silent killer."

It doesn't usually cause symptoms, but it can damage your body over time.

- If your blood pressure stays higher than 130/80 mm Hg for a period of time, it can cause serious health problems such as:
  - Heart disease
  - Stroke
  - Kidney disease
  - Dementia
- The only way to know whether you have high blood pressure is to have your blood pressure measured—a process that is simple and painless.
- If you find out you have high blood pressure, a health care professional can tell you how to prevent serious complications, including disability and premature death.

### Some things put us at greater risk for high blood pressure.



**Age:** Blood pressure tends to get higher as we get older. But it can affect many of us when we're younger too.



**Genes:** High blood pressure often runs in families.



**Sex:** Before age 60, more men than women have high blood pressure. After age 60, more women than men have it.



**Race or ethnicity:** While anyone can have high blood pressure, African Americans tend to get it at a younger age. Among Hispanic adults, people of Cuban, Puerto Rican, and Dominican backgrounds are at higher risk.



**Lifestyle habits:** Eating too much salt, drinking too much alcohol, being obese, smoking, and not getting enough exercise can raise our blood pressure.

## What steps can you take to lower your blood pressure?

### Set targets

Work with your doctor to set blood pressure numbers that are healthy for you. Use our worksheet at [nhlbi.nih.gov/hypertension](https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/hypertension) to track your progress.

### Take control

Make lifestyle changes such as eating healthy, staying active, and watching your weight. If you smoke, quitting can help prevent heart disease and other complications of high blood pressure.

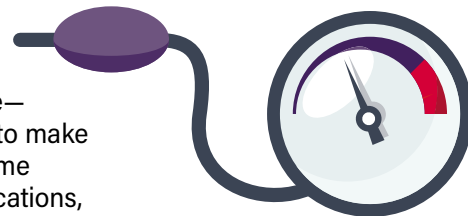
### Work together

Studies show that if you engage in heart healthy activities with people at home, at work, in your community, or online, you have a better chance of staying motivated.



## Taking the first step toward a healthy blood pressure.

**Making lifestyle changes now** can help keep your blood pressure in a healthy range—whether you have high blood pressure or you're trying to prevent it. You don't have to make big changes all at once. Small steps can get you where you want to go. Here are some ideas to start. If you have elevated blood pressure and your doctor prescribes medications, make sure to take them as directed.



### Why should I change?



#### Eat Healthy Foods

A diet **low in sodium and saturated fat**—like the DASH eating plan—can lower your blood pressure as effectively as medicines.



#### Move More

**Get at least 2½ hours of physical activity a week** to help lower and control blood pressure. That's just 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week.



#### Aim for a Healthy Weight

**Losing just 3 to 5 percent of your weight** can improve your blood pressure. If you weigh 200 lbs., that's a weight loss of 6 to 10 lbs.



#### Manage Stress

**Stress can contribute** to high blood pressure and other heart risks. If it goes on for a long time, it can make your body store more fat.



#### Stop Smoking

The **chemicals in tobacco smoke** can harm your heart and blood vessels. Quitting is hard. But many people have done it, and you can, too.

### How can I change?

- Add **one fruit or vegetable** to every meal.
- If you get fast food, ask for a **salad instead of fries**.
- Give **Meatless Monday** a try.
- Commit to **one salt-free day a week**. Use herbs for flavor instead.
  
- Invite a colleague for **regular walks or an exercise class**.
- Give the elevator a day off and **take the stairs**.
- Take a break to **play outside** with your kids.
- March in place** during commercial breaks while watching television with your family.
  
- Join a **weight loss program** with a buddy.
- Sign "social support" agreements** with three family members or friends.
  
- Practice **mindful meditation** for 10 minutes a day.
- Share a **funny video, joke, or inspirational quote** with a friend.
- Talk with your doctor** if you have trouble managing stress on your own
  
- Visit **Smokefree.gov** or **BeTobaccoFree.hhs.gov** to connect with others trying to quit.
- Sign up for a **support group** at work or your local clinic.
- Join a **sewing, knitting, or woodworking group** to keep your hands busy when you get urges.

**Take control of your blood pressure today! Learn more at [www.nhlbi.nih.gov/hypertension](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/hypertension)**





# BLOOD PRESSURE MEASUREMENT INSTRUCTIONS

**DON'T SMOKE, EXERCISE, DRINK CAFFEINATED BEVERAGES OR ALCOHOL WITHIN 30 MINUTES OF MEASUREMENT.**

**REST IN A CHAIR FOR AT LEAST 5 MINUTES WITH YOUR LEFT ARM RESTING COMFORTABLY ON A FLAT SURFACE AT HEART LEVEL. SIT CALMLY AND DON'T TALK.**

**MAKE SURE YOU'RE RELAXED. SIT STILL IN A CHAIR WITH YOUR FEET FLAT ON THE FLOOR WITH YOUR BACK STRAIGHT AND SUPPORTED.**

**TAKE AT LEAST TWO READINGS 1 MIN. APART IN MORNING BEFORE TAKING MEDICATIONS, AND IN EVENING BEFORE DINNER. RECORD ALL RESULTS.**

**USE PROPERLY CALIBRATED AND VALIDATED INSTRUMENT. CHECK THE CUFF SIZE AND FIT.**

**PLACE THE BOTTOM OF THE CUFF ABOVE THE BEND OF THE ELBOW.**

## American Heart Association recommended blood pressure levels

BLOOD PRESSURE CATEGORY	SYSTOLIC mm Hg (upper number)		DIASTOLIC mm Hg (lower number)
NORMAL	LESS THAN 120	and	LESS THAN 80
ELEVATED	120-129	and	LESS THAN 80
HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE (HYPERTENSION) STAGE 1	130-139	or	80-89
HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE (HYPERTENSION) STAGE 2	140 OR HIGHER	or	90 OR HIGHER
HYPERTENSIVE CRISIS (consult your doctor immediately)	HIGHER THAN 180	and/or	HIGHER THAN 120



\* Wait a few minutes and take blood pressure again. If it's still high, contact your doctor immediately.

LEARN MORE AT [HEART.ORG/HBP](http://HEART.ORG/HBP)

## Did You Know?

**High blood pressure (HBP) affects nearly 1 in 3 adults in the United States. That's one-third of the country.**

High blood pressure is often called the silent killer, because you might not have symptoms, but it will still be a major risk factor for heart disease and stroke.

High blood pressure is also called hypertension, a chronic medical condition in which the blood pressure is elevated. "Blood pressure" is the force of blood pushing against the walls of the arteries as the heart pumps out blood (systolic pressure). The diastolic pressure is when your heart is at rest between beats. If your blood pressure rises and stays high over time, it can damage your body in many ways, such as stroke, dementia, heart failure, heart attack, kidney failure and vision loss.

Understanding the increased risk of other physical problems can help you stay committed to taking your medication consistently, or make the lifestyle decisions you need to stay healthy, even when you can't feel the effects of high blood pressure.

## Risks

- **Older Age**  
Men older than 55, women over 65
- **Race/Ethnicity**  
HBP is more common in African American adults than in Caucasian or Hispanic adults
- **Overweight or Obesity**  
Pre-hypertension or HBP is more likely with a BMI >30
- **Gender**  
More men have HBP than women
- **Unhealthy Lifestyle Habits**  
Unhealthy lifestyle habits can raise your risk for HBP, including: too much salt, too much alcohol, not enough physical activity, tobacco use, not enough potassium in your diet, not enough sleep
- **Dyslipidemia**  
Abnormal amounts of lipids (fat) in the blood (i.e. high cholesterol, high levels of low density lipoproteins (LDL), and high triglycerides, low levels of high-density lipoproteins (HDL)
- **Diabetes Mellitus**  
A Family History of HBP or premature Cardiovascular Disease (CVD)
- **Long-Lasting Stress**  
Long-term stress due to job, lifestyle, financial or family issues can increase your risk to develop HBP.
- **Metabolic syndrome**  
Certain conditions (high blood pressure, abdominal obesity, high blood sugar, high triglycerides, and low HDL) that occur together, increasing your risk of heart disease, stroke and diabetes

## What Actions Can You Take?

- **Reaching a healthy weight (BMI-body mass index of 18.5 to 24.9)**  
Weight loss of 5 to 10% can improve blood pressure.
- **Eating a healthy diet (DASH Eating Plan – Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension)**
  - [www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/highbloodpressure.html](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/highbloodpressure.html)
  - Limit salt intake to 2,300 mg sodium per day or less
  - Increase food sources of potassium (vegetables, fruits, dairy products, beans, potatoes)
- **Being physically active**  
30 minutes of moderate-intensity activity most days of the week
- **Quitting use of tobacco products**  
Including e-cigarettes
- **Drinking alcohol in moderation, or not at all**  
No more than one drink for women or two for men
- **Managing stress in a healthy manner**
- **Getting adequate sleep**  
7-9 hours a night
- **Monitoring your blood pressure (BP), weight, blood sugar, and lipids.**
- **Annual eye exams for retinopathy.**
- **Taking your medicines as prescribed.**  
If you can't afford your medication, speak to your provider about different ones. We offer many generic medicines at \$0 copay. See Prescription Drug Plan Booklet for full list.
- **Discuss your questions or side effects with your provider or pharmacist.**
- **Your provider may require that you have an appointment weekly (to monitor your BP) while your medications are being adjusted.**  
Quarterly appointments may also be required for maintaining healthy blood pressure.
- **White Coat Syndrome**  
Work with your provider to assess for 'white-coat syndrome,' having elevated blood pressure specifically when in the doctor's office, and how to address this.

## When to call a provider

- Your blood pressure is 140/90 mmHg or higher on two or more occasions.
- You have significant side effects from any medicine you are taking.

## Need help or support?

- 24/7 Nurse Line: **877.950.5083**
- Personal Health Coaching: **866.575.2540**
- <https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/high-blood-pressure>
- <https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/high-blood-pressure/high-blood-pressure-toolkit-resources>
- <https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health-topics/high-blood-pressure>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/bloodpressure/index.htm>

## Seek medical care immediately from a doctor’s office, medical clinic, 911, or hospital emergency room if:

- Your blood pressure is usually normal or well-controlled, but it suddenly goes well above the normal range on one or more occasions, and/or you have:
  - Symptoms of a severe headache,
  - Nausea and vomiting,
  - Chest pain or chest pressure,
  - Numbness or tingling in your left arm and/or jaw,
  - Difficulty breathing, difficulty speaking, changes in vision,
- Your blood pressure is 180/110 mmHg or higher.  
With no other symptoms, if your blood pressure remains this high after you have waited 5 minutes and retaken it

# Blood Pressure Categories



BLOOD PRESSURE CATEGORY	SYSTOLIC mm Hg (upper number)		DIASTOLIC mm Hg (lower number)
<b>NORMAL</b>	<b>LESS THAN 120</b>	<b>and</b>	<b>LESS THAN 80</b>
<b>ELEVATED</b>	<b>120 – 129</b>	<b>and</b>	<b>LESS THAN 80</b>
<b>HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE (HYPERTENSION) STAGE 1</b>	<b>130 – 139</b>	<b>or</b>	<b>80 – 89</b>
<b>HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE (HYPERTENSION) STAGE 2</b>	<b>140 OR HIGHER</b>	<b>or</b>	<b>90 OR HIGHER</b>
<b>HYPERTENSIVE CRISIS (consult your doctor immediately)</b>	<b>HIGHER THAN 180</b>	<b>and/or</b>	<b>HIGHER THAN 120</b>

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