

A patient's guide to High Blood Pressure. Information to help you stay healthy.

Blood pressure is the force of blood pushing against the artery walls as it moves through the body. High blood pressure (also called hypertension) means that blood is exerting too much force on the artery walls. When blood pressure stays high-day after day and month after month-it damages the arteries, along with harming the heart, eyes, kidneys and other organs. Fortunately there's a lot you can do to control it. Working with your health care provider and making changes in the way you live will help you stay healthy.

### Measuring Blood Pressure

Two levels of pressure are measured. Each level is recorded as a number. The numbers are written side by side or one above the other. For example, your doctor may say your blood pressure is 110 over 70

Systolic pressure	<u>110</u>
Diastolic pressure	70

Systolic pressure is the pressure placed on artery walls as the heart beats and pushes blood into the arteries. Diastolic pressure is the pressure left in the arteries when the heart relaxes between beats. Any number of things, like physical activity or strong emotions, can raise blood pressure for a short time without being a sign of high blood pressure.

Blood pressure is high if you consistently have a systolic pressure of 140 or higher, and a diastolic pressure of 90 or higher. You may be prehypertensive if you consistently have a systolic pressure of 120 to 139, and a diastolic pressure of 80 to 89.

### Your Treatment

Your treatment begins with changes you can make in your lifestyle to help lower your blood pressure, such as:

- Changing your diet
- Losing weight
- Exercising regularly
- Giving up tobacco
- Managing stress

These changes alone may lower your blood pressure. If lifestyle changes do not lower your blood pressure enough, you may need to take medication.

### Make changes in your diet & lifestyle

#### Eat less sodium

Too much sodium causes your body to hold fluid. Pumping extra fluid can raise blood pressure. Have only 2, 000 to 2, 400 mg. of sodium a day. One teaspoon of salt is equal to 2, 000 mg. of sodium.

Eat fewer of these high-sodium foods:

Packaged bread, pancake & waffle mix	Snack chips & crackers
Canned vegetables & juices	Pretzels & salted nuts
Vegetables in brine	Canned broths
Canned fish (like tuna)	Canned soups
Canned or smoked meats	Tomato sauce
Bacon, ham, hot dogs, Salt pork, sausage	Garlic, onion, celery salt
Sandwich meats	Seasoning salt or MSG
Boxed convenience meals	Seasoned mixes for chili, tacos, rice, spaghetti
	Most bottled seasonings

Season foods with lemon juice, herbs, garlic, onion, or flavored vinegar instead of salt. Snack on low-salt foods. Buy fresh meats and vegetables instead of canned or frozen packaged foods. Read food labels to see if the food is a good choice. Many restaurants prepare foods with high-sodium seasonings. Ask about low-sodium options.

### Eat Less Fat

Limit foods that contain cholesterol and saturated fat. Eating high fat foods contributes to weight gain- a factor that can lead to high blood pressure. Eating too much fat also can contribute to high blood cholesterol-a risk factor for heart attack and stroke. Limit high-fat foods like butter, cheese, whole milk, salad dressing, fatty cuts of meat, poultry skin, solid and vegetable shortening and fried foods. Limit high-cholesterol foods like egg yolks, shellfish and organ meats (like liver).

### Limit Alcohol

Drinking too much alcohol can raise blood pressure and damage the heart. Have no more than 1 to 2 servings of alcohol a day. *A serving is: 1 oz of hard liquor, 12 oz. of beer or 4 oz. of wine.*

### Maintain a Healthy Weight

Being overweight contributes to the development of high blood pressure. Before starting a weight loss program, talk to your doctor about healthy ways to lose weight. To lose weight, experts suggest that you reduce your total calories, control your portions, cut back on high-fat, high-calories, control your portions, cut back on high-fat, high-calorie foods, and exercise regularly.

### Exercise Regularly

Exercise helps lower blood pressure. The best exercises for the heart and blood vessels are aerobic exercises, like swimming, biking or brisk walking. Experts suggest exercising for at least 30 minutes 5 to 6 times a week. If you haven't exercised in awhile, see your doctor before you start. Go slowly and gradually increase your pace and the amount of time you exercise.

### Give up Tobacco

Tobacco narrows blood vessels and raises blood pressure. If you quit smoking or using other tobacco products, you can significantly lower your risk of heart disease and lower your blood pressure.

## Manage Diabetes

People with diabetes are more likely to develop high blood pressure. Controlling your blood sugar can lower your blood pressure and help you avoid other health problems. Follow a meal plan, exercise regularly, take medication (if needed) and follow treatment guidelines.

## Learn to Manage Stress

Your body reacts to stress by producing chemicals which can raise blood pressure. There are many healthy ways to manage stress, such as exercising, meditation, or listening to relaxation tapes. If you have trouble managing stress, consider taking a stress management class.

## Medication

Medication may be prescribed to help lower your blood pressure. There are many types of blood pressure medication. It may take time to find the medication and dose that works best for you. If you have trouble with your medication, tell your doctor. Also, tell your doctor about all the prescription and nonprescription medications you take. Some nonprescription medications can increase blood pressure. Even if you are taking medication, you will still need to make some lifestyle changes.

## Follow Up Care

Your health care provider will check your blood pressure from time to time to see how well your treatment is working. You also may be asked to check your blood pressure at home. Doing this will help you become familiar with your blood pressure range and the things that affect it. Checking your blood pressure at home should not replace follow-up appointments with your health care provider.

Try not to do too many things all at once. If you work on one change at a time, you'll be more likely to stick to your lifestyle changes.

