



Managing Your Numbers:

Lowering Your Blood Pressure

High Blood Pressure is often called “the silent killer” because there are often no symptoms and your numbers are your only warning.

If you have high blood pressure, it makes your heart work harder and can lead to plaque buildup in your arteries and, eventually, a heart attack or heart failure.

High blood pressure defined:

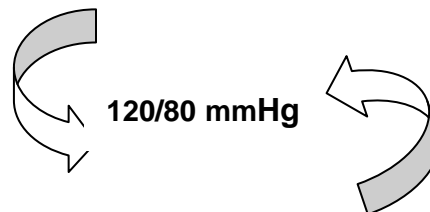
- For most adults: equal or greater than 140/90 mmHg
- For adults with diabetes: equal or greater than 130/80 mmHg

What to do if your blood pressure is high

Healthful eating and physical activity are first-line steps you can take to achieve your blood pressure goals. However, many people need medications (most often, more than one) to manage it.

A blood pressure reading consists of two numbers, both measure in millimeters of mercury (mmHg).

Systolic pressure is the force of blood against the artery walls as the heart beats



Diastolic pressure is the blood pressure between heart beats

The first, or top, number is most important for people battling high blood pressure.



8 Things You Can Do to Prevent and Control High Blood Pressure

- 1. Eat heart healthy.** Follow an eating plan that emphasizes fruits, vegetables, and low-fat dairy products (e.g., milk or yogurt). Eating more fruits and vegetables can lower your blood pressure. Eat at least 2 ½ cups of vegetables a day, especially high-potassium broccoli, spinach, and tomatoes. Eat at least 2 cups of fruit each day, especially high-potassium oranges, cantaloupe and bananas.
- 2. Reduce the amount of salt and sodium you eat.** Read food labels to choose canned, processed, and convenience foods that are low in sodium and remember to rinse canned foods before cooking them. Avoid fast foods that are high in sodium altogether. Nearly 75% of the sodium you get is from convenience foods and fast foods. Limit use of the salt shaker, just ¼ tsp of salt has 575 mg of sodium; your goal is less than 2,300 mg per day.
- 3. Limit alcoholic beverages.** For men, that means no more than 2 drinks per day, for women no more than 1 drink per day.
- 4. Become more physically active.** Regular activity helps you manage stress and makes your heart stronger, which means the heart pumps more blood with less effort and force on your arteries. Work up to at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity (e.g., brisk walk or biking) 5 or more days per week. If you do not have 30 minutes, aim for 15 minutes twice a day or 10 minutes three times a day.
- 5. Lose a few pounds and work to maintain a healthy weight.** Losing even 10 pounds can lower blood pressure and is as effective as a blood pressure lowering medication.
- 6. Quit smoking, if you smoke.** Smoking does not directly cause high blood pressure, but it greatly increases your risk of heart and blood vessel disease.
- 7. Talk with your health care provider.** Ask what your blood pressure numbers are, what they mean, and what your doctor can do to help.
- 8. Take medication as prescribed.** If you need medication, make sure you understand what it's for and how and when to take it. If you stop taking it, remember to talk to your doctor about when you stopped taking it and why you stopped. There may be other alternatives to try.