

What you should know...

High blood pressure increases your risk of having a heart attack, heart failure, stroke and other life-threatening illnesses. Anyone can have high blood pressure. As you get older, the likelihood of developing high blood pressure increases. For people that are overweight, obese, or have diabetes, the odds are even higher.

THINGS YOU CAN DO TO CONTROL AND PREVENT HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE

- 1. *Talk with your health care professional.*** Ask what your blood pressure numbers are and what they mean.
 - 2. *Take medication, if needed, as prescribed.*** Make sure you understand what the medication is for and how and when to take it.
 - 3. *Lose weight if you are overweight and maintain a healthy weight.*** Limit portion sizes, especially for high calorie foods, and try to eat only as many calories as you burn each day – or less if you want to lose weight.
 - 4. *Eat heart healthfully.*** Follow an eating plan that emphasizes fruits, vegetables, and low fat dairy products and is moderate in total fat and low in saturated fat and cholesterol.
 - 5. *Reduce salt and sodium intake.*** Read food labels to choose canned, processed, and convenience foods that are lower in sodium.
- Limit sodium intake to no more than 2,400 mg, or about 1 teaspoon's worth of salt each day. For someone with high blood pressure, your doctor may advise less. Avoid fast foods that are high in salt and sodium. Use spices or herbs instead of salt to season foods.
- 6. *Reduce your alcohol consumption.*** For men, that means a maximum of two drinks a day, for women, a maximum of one.
 - 7. *Become more physically active.*** Work up to at least 30 minutes of activity at a moderate level, such as brisk walking or bicycling each day. If you don't have 30 minutes, try to find two 15 minute periods or even three 10 minute periods for physical activity. You don't have to go to a gym to get those 30 minutes. For example, take stairs instead of an elevator or escalator when it's practical. Park your car a little farther from where you're going than usual. If you take public transportation, get off a stop early and walk the rest of the way.
 - 8. *Quit smoking.*** Smoking increases your chances of developing a stroke, heart disease, peripheral artery disease, and several other forms of cancer.



Health New England *How Can We Help?*SM

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Know Your Numbers

Knowing your blood pressure numbers can save your life. Normal blood pressure readings are less than 120/80.

The number on top is called **Systolic pressure.**

The systolic number is the force of blood in the arteries when your heart beats.

The bottom number is the **Diastolic pressure.**

It is the force of blood in the arteries when the heart relaxes between beats. Both numbers are important. In hypertension, one or both numbers may be too high. High blood pressure is called “*The Silent Killer*” because there often are no symptoms. Your numbers are your only warning.

BLOOD PRESSURE LEVELS FOR ADULTS ⁺*

CATEGORY	SYSTOLIC NUMBER		DIASTOLIC NUMBER	RESULT
Normal	less than 120	and	less than 80	Good for you!
Prehypertension	120–139	or	80–89	Your blood pressure could be a problem. Make the changes listed above to lower blood pressure. If you have diabetes, see your doctor.
Hypertension	140 or higher	or	90 or higher	You have high blood pressure. Ask your doctor how to control it.

+ If systolic and diastolic pressures fall into different categories, overall status is the higher category. * From the 7th Annual Report of the Joint National Committee on Prevention, Detection and Treatment of High Blood Pressure: NIH Publication No. 03-5230, National High Blood Pressure Education Program, May 2003. Adapted from the National Institute of Health, National Heart Lung and Blood Institute

*For more information and
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