

Hypertension Education Packet



You've been identified as an individual with high blood pressure, also known as hypertension. This packet is a collection of resources that will explain what hypertension is, review the consequences of hypertension, and provide ways to manage it so you can have a healthy life.

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What is hypertension?

Introduction Video

These videos explain what hypertension is and what may cause it.



Video: High Blood Pressure Basics

https://eplayer.my-emmi.com/eplayer/en/?viewId=E2D81E88-0719-4351-A6DB-FE1C559D9BE7&video=true&src=emmi&language=en&chapter_id=0



Video: Introduction to High Blood Pressure

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=QJcCnbPTZF8&t=116s>



What is High Blood Pressure?

Blood pressure is the force of blood pushing against blood vessel walls. It's measured in millimeters of mercury (mm Hg).

High blood pressure (HBP) means the pressure in your arteries is higher than it should be. Another name for high blood pressure is hypertension.

Blood pressure is written as two numbers, such as 112/78 mm Hg. The top, or larger, number (called systolic pressure) is the pressure when the heart beats. The bottom, or smaller, number (called diastolic pressure) is the pressure when the heart rests between beats.

Normal blood pressure is below 120/80 mm Hg. If you're an adult and your systolic pressure is 120 to 129, and your diastolic pressure is less than 80, you have **elevated blood pressure**. **High blood pressure** is a systolic pressure of 130 or higher, or a diastolic pressure of 80 or higher, that stays high over time.

High blood pressure usually has no signs or symptoms. That's why it is so dangerous. But it can be managed.

Nearly half of the American population over age 20, has HBP, and many don't even know it. Not treating high blood pressure is dangerous. High blood pressure increases the risk of heart attack and stroke.

Make sure you get your blood pressure checked regularly and treat it the way your health care professional advises.

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

Am I at higher risk of developing HBP?

There are risk factors that increase your chances of developing HBP. Some you can control, and some you can't.

Those that can be controlled are:

- Cigarette smoking and exposure to secondhand smoke
- Diabetes
- Being obese or overweight
- High cholesterol
- Unhealthy diet (high in sodium, low in potassium, and drinking too much alcohol)
- Physical inactivity

Factors that can't be modified or are difficult to control are:

- Family history of high blood pressure
- Race/ethnicity
- Increasing age
- Gender (males)
- Chronic kidney disease
- Obstructive sleep apnea

Socioeconomic status and psychosocial stress are also risk factors for HBP. These can affect access to basic living needs, medication, health care professionals, and the ability to adopt lifestyle changes.

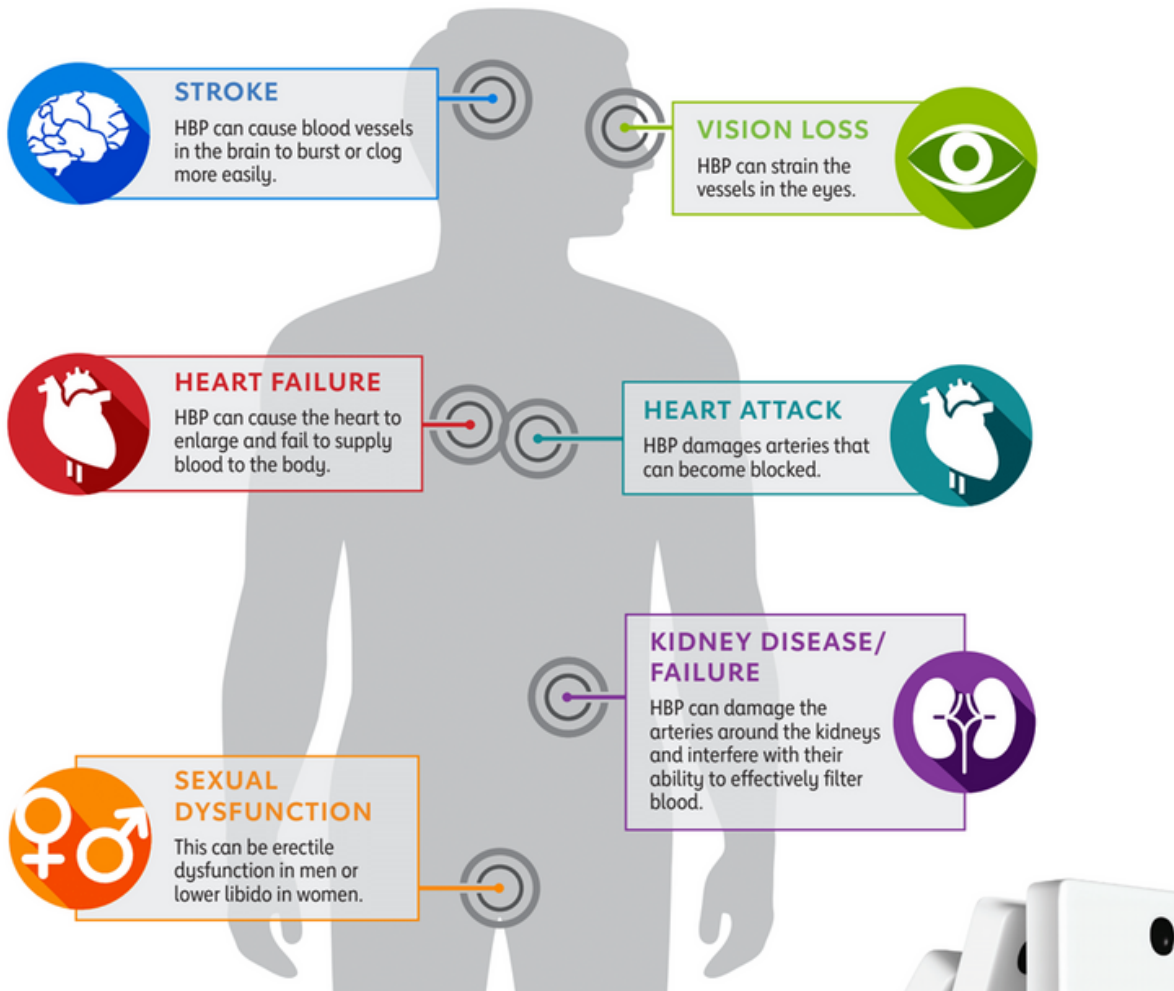
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What are the consequences of high blood pressure?



Consequences of High Blood Pressure

High blood pressure is often the first domino in a chain or "domino effect" leading to devastating consequences, like:



A simple blood pressure check is the first step to preventing the "domino effect."
Learn more at heart.org/hbp.

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American Stroke Association.
A division of the American Heart Association.

let's talk about
STROKE



Prevention

let's talk about

High Blood Pressure and Stroke

High blood pressure means that the force of the blood pushing against the blood vessel walls is consistently in the high range. Uncontrolled HBP can lead to stroke, heart attack, heart failure or kidney failure.

Two numbers represent blood pressure. The higher (systolic) number is the pressure in your arteries when your heart beats. The lower (diastolic) number is the pressure while your heart rests between beats. The systolic number is always listed first. Blood pressure is measured in millimeters of mercury (mm Hg).

Normal blood pressure is below 120/80 mm Hg. If you're an adult and your systolic pressure is 120 to 129, and your diastolic pressure is less than 80, you have elevated blood pressure. High blood pressure is a systolic pressure of 130 or higher or a diastolic pressure of 80 or higher that stays high over time.

BLOOD PRESSURE CATEGORY	SYSTOLIC mm Hg (upper number)		DIASTOLIC mm Hg (lower number)
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HYPERTENSIVE CRISIS (consult your doctor immediately)	HIGHER THAN 180	and/or	HIGHER THAN 120

How does high blood pressure increase stroke risk?

High blood pressure is a major risk factor for stroke.

HBP adds to your heart's workload and damages your arteries and organs over time. Compared to people whose blood pressure is normal, people with HBP are more likely to have a stroke.

About 87% of strokes are caused by narrowed or clogged blood vessels in the brain that cut off the blood flow to brain cells. This is an **ischemic stroke**. High blood pressure causes damage to the inner lining of the blood vessels. This will narrow an artery.

About 13% of strokes occur when a blood vessel ruptures in or near the brain. This is a **hemorrhagic stroke**. Chronic HBP or aging blood vessels are the main causes of this type of stroke. HBP strains blood vessels. Over time, they no longer hold up to the pressure and rupture.

Am I at higher risk for HBP?

There are risk factors that increase your chances of developing HBP. Some you can improve or treat, and some you can't.

Those that can be improved or treated are:

- Cigarette smoking and exposure to secondhand smoke
- Diabetes
- Being overweight or obese
- High cholesterol
- Physical inactivity
- Poor diet (high in sodium, low in potassium, and drinking too much alcohol)

Factors that can't be changed or are difficult to control are:

- Family history of high blood pressure
- Race/ethnicity

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American Stroke Association.
A division of the American Heart Association.

Let's Talk About High Blood Pressure and Stroke

- Increasing age
- Gender (males)
- Chronic kidney disease
- Obstructive sleep apnea

Socioeconomic status and psychosocial stress are also risk factors for HBP. These can affect access to basic living necessities, medication, health care providers, and the ability to make healthy lifestyle changes.

How can I control high blood pressure?

Even if you have had a prior stroke or heart attack, controlling high blood pressure can help prevent another one. Take these steps:

- Don't smoke and avoid secondhand smoke.
- Reach and maintain a healthy weight.
- Eat a healthy diet low in sodium and saturated and trans fat. Limit sweets and red and processed meats.
- Eat fruits and vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy products, poultry, fish and nuts. Include foods rich in potassium.
- Be physically active. Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity per week.
- Limit alcohol to no more than two drinks a day if you're a man and one drink a day if you're a woman.
- Take all medicines as prescribed to control your blood pressure.
- Know what your blood pressure should be and try to keep it at that level.



HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

- 1 Call 1-888-4-STROKE (1-888-478-7653) or visit stroke.org to learn more about stroke or find local support groups.
- 2 Sign up for our monthly *Stroke Connection e-news* for stroke survivors and caregivers at StrokeConnection.org.
- 3 Connect with others who have also had an experience with stroke by joining our Support Network at stroke.org/SupportNetwork.

Do you have questions for your doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write down your questions for the next time you see your health care provider.

For example:

What should my blood pressure be?

How often should my blood pressure be checked?

MY QUESTIONS:

We have many other fact sheets to help you make healthier choices, manage your condition or care for a loved one. Visit stroke.org/LetsTalkAboutStroke to learn more.

How can I improve my blood pressure?



ANSWERS
by heart

Lifestyle + Risk Reduction
High Blood Pressure

How Can I Reduce High Blood Pressure?

By treating high blood pressure, you can help reduce your risk for a stroke, heart attack, heart failure and kidney failure.

These are steps you can take now:

- Reach and maintain a healthy weight.
- Eat a heart-healthy diet that includes vegetables, fruits, whole grains, low-fat dairy products, poultry, fish, legumes, non-tropical vegetable oils and nuts. It should also limit sodium, sweets, saturated fats, sugar sweetened beverages and red meats.
- Be more physically active.
- Don't smoke and avoid secondhand smoke.
- Limit alcohol to no more than one drink per day for women or two drinks a day for men.
- Take your medication as prescribed.
- Know what your blood pressure should be and work to keep it at that level.



How can I lose weight?

In order to lose weight, you need to use up more calories than you eat and drink every day. Talk with your health care professional about a healthy eating and physical activity plan that will help you reach your weight loss goals. When you lose weight, your blood pressure often goes down! An initial weight loss goal of at least 5% will help reduce your blood pressure.

How do I limit sodium?

Aim for an ideal limit of less than 1,500 milligrams (mg) per day of sodium. Even cutting back by 1,000 mg a day can help improve your blood pressure and heart health.

You can reduce your sodium intake by:

- Reading the Nutrition Facts label on foods so you know how much sodium is in food products. Foods with 140 mg or less sodium per serving are considered low in sodium.
- Avoiding prepackaged, processed and prepared foods, which tend to be higher in sodium.

- Reducing salt in cooking and at the table. Learn to use herbs and salt-free spices instead.

How do I limit alcohol?

Ask your health care professional if you're allowed to drink alcohol, and if so, how much.

If you drink more than two drinks a day if you're male or more than one drink a day if you're female, it may add to high blood pressure. One drink is equal to 12 ounces of beer, 5 ounces of wine, 1.5 ounces of 80-proof distilled spirits or 1 ounce of 100-proof spirits.

If cutting back on alcohol is hard for you to do on your own, ask about groups that can help.

How can I be more active?

Regular physical activity helps to reduce blood pressure, control weight and reduce stress. It's best to start slowly

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How Can I Reduce High Blood Pressure?

and do something you enjoy, like taking brisk walks or riding a bicycle.

Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity (or a combination of both) per week. Talk to your health care professional about a good plan for you.

What should I know about medication?

Depending on your risk and blood pressure levels, you may need one or more types of medication to keep your blood pressure at a healthy level. You may need a trial period before your doctor finds the best medication, or combination of medications, for you.

What's most important is that you take your medication exactly as prescribed. Never stop treatment on your own. If you have problems or side effects from your medication, talk to your health care professional.



HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

- 1 Call 1-800-AHA-USA1 (1-800-242-8721), or visit heart.org to learn more about heart disease and stroke.
- 2 Sign up for our monthly *Heart Insight* e-news for heart patients and their families at HeartInsight.org.
- 3 Connect with others sharing similar journeys with heart disease and stroke by joining our Support Network at heart.org/SupportNetwork.

Do you have questions for your doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write down your questions for the next time you see your health care professional.

For example:

Can I drink any alcohol?

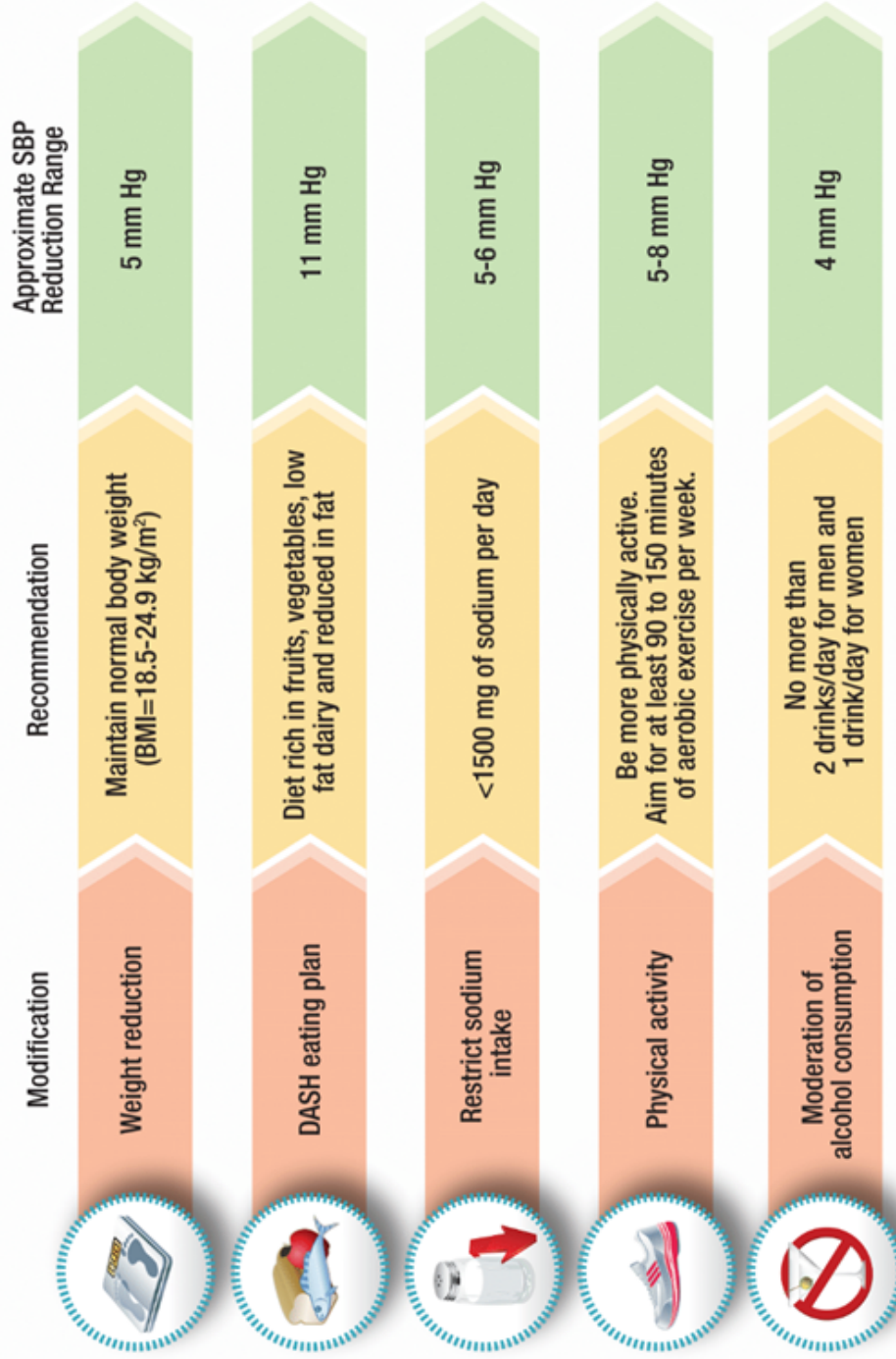
How often should I check my blood pressure?

MY QUESTIONS:

We have many other fact sheets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk for heart disease, manage your condition or care for a loved one. Visit heart.org/AnswersByHeart to learn more.



What Can I Do To Improve My Blood Pressure?



BP = Blood pressure, BMI = Body mass index, SBP = Systolic blood pressure, DASH = Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension

American Heart Association.



Ranges According to 2017 Hypertension Clinical Practice Guidelines
Recommendations for Treatment and Management of Hypertension

Resources for Physical Exercise

Physical exercise is an important part of managing your blood pressure. The QR codes below have resources to help you incorporate physical exercise into your life.



Getting Active to Control High Blood Pressure

<https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/high-blood-pressure/changes-you-can-make-to-manage-high-blood-pressure/getting-active-to-control-high-blood-pressure>



Video: Easy Ways to Incorporate Exercise into Your Life

https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=ix0L91x_NNs&ab_channel=NHLBI

Resources for Eating Healthy

Eating healthy is also an essential part of managing your hypertension. Use the QR codes to find recipe ideas and other tips to create a healthier lifestyle.



Video: 3 Delicious Heart Healthy Recipes

https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=gdIVJOkmJd4&ab_channel=NHLBI



DASH Eating Plan: Tools and Resources

<https://healthyeating.nhlbi.nih.gov>



Budget-Friendly Foods with MyPlate

https://www.myplate.gov/app/shopsimple?utm_source=shop-simple&utm_medium=redirect&utm_campaign=desktop-redirect



Healthy Eating on a Budget Cookbook

https://myplate-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/cookbooks/HealthyEatingonaBudgetCookbook_0.pdf



American Heart Association Recipe Collection

<https://recipes.heart.org>



Why Should I Limit Sodium?

You may have been told by your health care professional to reduce the sodium, or salt, in your diet. Most people eat too much sodium, often without knowing it. Reducing the amount of sodium in your diet can help you lower or avoid high blood pressure.

Your body needs sodium to work properly. It's regulated in the body by your kidneys, and it helps control your body's fluid balance. It also plays a key role in nerve and muscle function.

But too much sodium in your system causes your body to retain (hold onto) water. This may cause puffiness, bloating and weight gain.



How does too much sodium affect my heart health?

When there's extra sodium in your bloodstream, it pulls water into your blood vessels, increasing the amount of blood inside your blood vessels. With more blood flowing through your blood vessels, blood pressure increases. In some people, this may lead to or raise high blood pressure.

Having less sodium in your diet may help you lower or avoid high blood pressure, which is a major risk factor for heart disease and stroke.

How much sodium do I need?

Nine out of 10 Americans consume too much sodium. The average American eats more than 3,400 milligrams (mg) of sodium a day.

- The American Heart Association recommends no more than 2,300 mg a day and an ideal limit of less than 1,500 mg per day for most adults, especially for those with high blood pressure.
- Even cutting back by 1,000 mg a day can improve blood pressure and heart health.

What are sources of sodium?

Many foods in their natural state contain some sodium. But the largest amount of sodium comes from processed, packaged and restaurant foods.

Pay attention to food labels, because they tell how much sodium is in food products. For example: foods with 140 mg or less sodium per serving are considered low in sodium. Sodium levels of the same type of food can vary widely. Compare the Nutrition Facts labels and select the products with the lowest amount of sodium per serving.

Some over-the-counter and prescription medicines also contain lots of sodium. Ask your health care professional or pharmacist about the sodium in your medicines. Make reading the labels of all over-the-counter drugs a habit, too.

What foods should I limit?

The best way to reduce sodium is to avoid prepackaged, processed and prepared foods, which tend to be higher in sodium.

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Why Should I Limit Sodium?

Watch out for the “Salty 6” – the top six common foods that add the most salt to your diet.

- Breads and rolls
- Pizza
- Sandwiches
- Cold cuts and cured meats
- Soup
- Burritos and tacos

These are some other foods can also be sources of “hidden” sodium:

- Cheeses and buttermilk
- Canned vegetables
- Frozen dinners and snack foods
- Condiments (ketchup, mustard, mayonnaise)
- Sauces, such as barbecue, soy, steak and Worcestershire

How can I cook with less salt and more flavor?

- Avoid adding table salt to foods.
- Flavor foods with herbs, spices, lemon, lime, vinegar or salt-free seasoning blends.

- Use fresh poultry, fish and lean meat, rather than canned, smoked or processed types.
- Choose unsalted nuts and low-sodium canned foods.
- Cook dried peas and beans.
- Use products made without added salt. Try low-sodium bouillon and soups and unsalted broth.
- Rinse canned vegetables and beans to reduce sodium.

What about eating out?

Controlling your sodium intake doesn’t mean spoiling the pleasure of eating out. But order carefully. Consider these tips for meals away from home:

- Look at the restaurant’s menu before going out. Check the online nutrition information if available.
- Select fresh greens and fruits when available. Ask for oil and vinegar to top your salad or ask for the dressing on the side.
- Be specific about what you want and how you want your food prepared. Request that your dish be prepared without added salt.
- Remember portion control. You can always bring home a to-go box!

HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

- 1 Call 1-800-AHA-USA1 (1-800-242-8721), or visit heart.org to learn more about heart disease and stroke.
- 2 Sign up for our monthly *Heart Insight* e-news for heart patients and their families at HeartInsight.org.
- 3 Connect with others sharing similar journeys with heart disease and stroke by joining our Support Network at heart.org/SupportNetwork.

Do you have questions for your doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write down your questions for the next time you see your health care professional.

For example:

What’s my daily sodium limit?

Is there sodium in the medicine I take?

MY QUESTIONS:

We have many other fact sheets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk for heart disease, manage your condition or care for a loved one. Visit heart.org/AnswersByHeart to learn more.



What is High Blood Pressure Medicine?

Your health care professional has prescribed medicine to help lower your blood pressure. Depending on your risk and blood pressure levels, you may need one or more types of medicine to keep your blood pressure at a healthy level.

You may have to see your health care professional often until your blood pressure is under control. Every person reacts differently to medication. You may need a trial period before your doctor finds the best medication, or combination of medications, for you.



Taking your medication the way your health care professional tells you to is key to reducing your blood pressure.

What should I know about high blood pressure medication?

- Different medications work in unique ways to help lower your blood pressure.
- HBP medication only works when you take it as prescribed.
- Medication shouldn't be stopped without your health care professional's approval.
- Even after your blood pressure is lowered, treatment usually continues for your lifetime to keep your blood pressure normal.

What types of medication may be prescribed?

One or more of these medications are initially used to treat high blood pressure:

- Diuretics - help control blood pressure by removing excess sodium (salt) and water from your body through urination. These are sometimes called "water pills."

- Angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors, angiotensin II receptor blockers (ARBs) and calcium channel blockers - relax and open up the narrowed blood vessels and lower blood pressure.

What are the side effects?

Some HBP medications can affect certain body functions. This may result in side effects. But the benefits of using them outweigh the risk of side effects in most people.

Some of the common side effects that may occur include:

- Weakness, tiredness or drowsiness
- Erectile dysfunction
- Trouble sleeping
- Slow or fast heartbeat
- Skin rash
- Feeling thirsty
- Cough
- Muscle cramps
- Headache, dizziness or light-headedness
- Constipation or diarrhea

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American Heart Association.

What is High Blood Pressure Medicine?

If you are having side effects, don't stop taking your medication to avoid them. Your health care professional can work with you to find the medication or dose that works best for you.

How can I remember to take my medication?

Sometimes it's hard to keep track of your medication. But to be safe, you must take it properly. These are some good ways:

- Take your medicine at the same time each day.
- Take medicine along with daily events such as brushing your teeth.
- Use a weekly pill box with separate sections for each day or time of day.
- Ask family and friends to help remind you.
- Use a medicine calendar.
- Set a reminder on your smartphone.



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- 3 Connect with others sharing similar journeys with heart disease and stroke by joining our Support Network at heart.org/SupportNetwork.

Do you have questions for your doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write down your questions for the next time you see your health care professional.

For example:

Should I avoid any foods or medicines?

What reactions or side effects should I expect?

MY QUESTIONS:

We have many other fact sheets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk for heart disease, manage your condition or care for a loved one. Visit heart.org/AnswersByHeart to learn more.

Tips for Taking Blood Pressure Medications

In addition to lifestyle modifications, your provider may prescribe medication to help you manage your high blood pressure. The video below provides tips for taking medication correctly.



Video: Tips for Taking Blood Pressure Medicines As Directed
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jyzjgIXTkzE&t=101s>

African Americans and High Blood Pressure



ANSWERS
by heart



Cardiovascular Conditions

What About African Americans and High Blood Pressure?

African Americans in the U.S. have a higher prevalence of high blood pressure (HBP) than other racial and ethnic groups. It is also often more severe in Black people and some medications are less effective in treating Black people with HBP.

High blood pressure usually has no symptoms. That's why it's called the "silent killer." The only way to know if your blood pressure is high is to have your health care professional check it regularly.



What's blood pressure?

When your heart beats, it pumps blood into your blood vessels. This creates pressure against the blood vessel walls. This blood pressure causes your blood to flow to all parts of your body. Blood pressure is measured in millimeters of mercury (mm Hg).

What should my blood pressure be?

Normal blood pressure is below 120/80 mm Hg. The top, or larger, number is the systolic pressure. It's the pressure in your arteries when the heart beats. The bottom, or smaller, number is diastolic pressure. This is the pressure when the heart rests between beats. If you're an adult with a systolic blood pressure of 120 to 129 mm Hg, and your diastolic pressure is less than 80 mm Hg, you have elevated blood pressure. High blood pressure is a pressure of 130 systolic or higher and/or 80 diastolic or higher that stays high over time.

How often should I have my blood pressure checked?

For proper diagnosis of HBP, your health care professional will use an average based on two or more readings obtained on two or more occasions.

Checking your blood pressure is quick and painless. You can have it done at a doctor's office, hospital, clinic, nurse's office, pharmacy, company clinic or health fair. You can also purchase a home blood pressure monitor so you can check it at home. Your health care professional will tell you how often you should have it checked.

How can high blood pressure affect me?

Left uncontrolled or undetected, HBP can damage blood vessels in various parts of your body. And the longer it's left untreated, the more likely organs such as your heart, brain, kidneys or eyes will be damaged. This can lead to heart attack, stroke, heart failure, kidney disease, erectile dysfunction and loss of vision.

What can I do about my blood pressure?

Making healthy lifestyle changes is the first step.

- Don't smoke and avoid secondhand smoke.
- Reach and maintain a healthy weight.
- Eat a healthy diet that is low in saturated and trans fats and rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains and low-fat dairy products.

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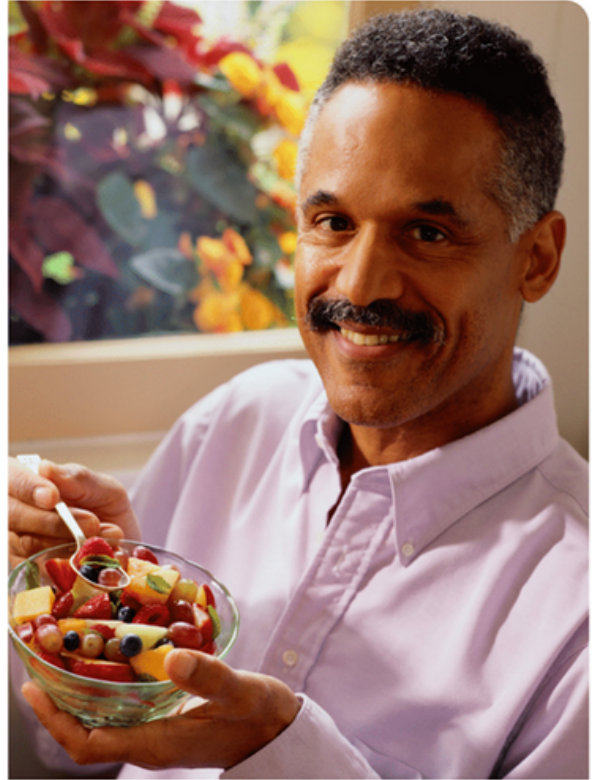
What About African Americans and High Blood Pressure?

- Aim to consume less than 1,500 milligrams (mg) per day of sodium (salt). Even reducing your daily intake by 1000 mg can help.
- Eat high potassium foods. Aim for 3,500 – 5,000 mg of dietary potassium per day.
- Limit alcohol to no more than one drink per day for women or two drinks a day for men.
- Be more physically active. Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity per week.

What about medications?

Depending on your risk and blood pressure levels, you may need one or more types of medication in addition to lifestyle changes. In African Americans, thiazide-type diuretics (water pills) and/or calcium channel blockers are more effective in lowering blood pressure when given alone or as initial medicines in a multidrug regimen. You may need a trial period before your health care professional finds the best one, or combination of medications, for you.

If you are prescribed medication, always follow the directions from your health care professional and pharmacist. Don't stop taking the medication unless your health care professional tells you to.



HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

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- 2 Sign up for our monthly *Heart Insight* e-news for heart patients and their families at HeartInsight.org.
- 3 Connect with others sharing similar journeys with heart disease and stroke by joining our Support Network at heart.org/SupportNetwork.

Do you have questions for your doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write down your questions for the next time you see your health care professional.

For example:

How is high blood pressure treated?

What type of diet will help?

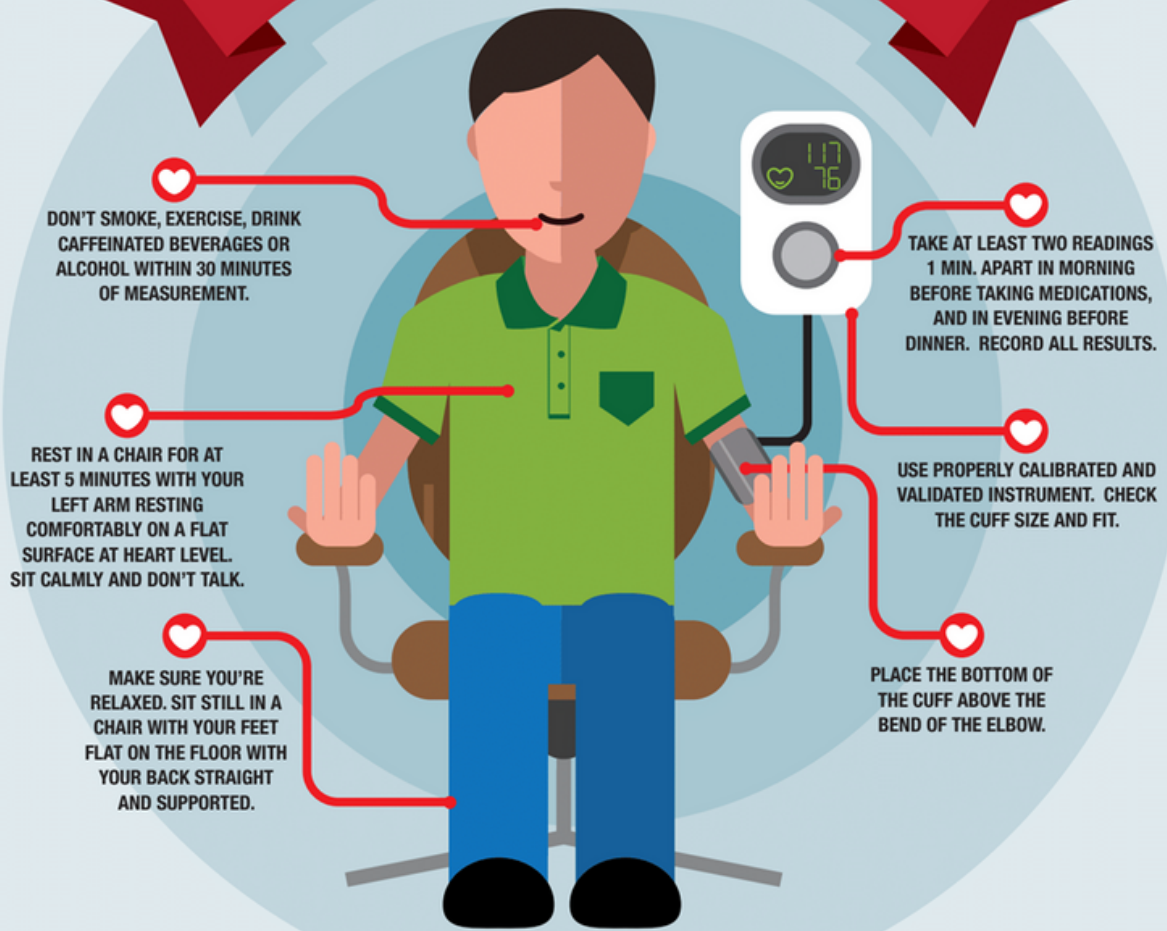
MY QUESTIONS:

We have many other fact sheets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk for heart disease, manage your condition or care for a loved one. Visit heart.org/AnswersByHeart to learn more.

How do I correctly measure my blood pressure?



BLOOD PRESSURE MEASUREMENT INSTRUCTIONS



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

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