

What Can You Do To Lower Your Blood Pressure?

1. Maintain a healthy weight

- Check with your health care provider to see if you need to lose weight.
- If you do, lose weight slowly using a healthy eating plan and engaging in physical activity.

2. Be physically active

- Engage in physical activity for a total of 30 minutes on most days of the week.
- Combine everyday chores with moderate-level sporting activities, such as walking, to achieve your physical activity goals.

3. Follow a healthy eating plan

- Set up a healthy eating plan with food low in saturated fat, total fat, and cholesterol, and high in fruits, vegetables, and lowfat dairy foods such as the DASH eating plan.
- Write down everything that you eat and drink in a food diary. Note areas that are successful or need improvement.
- If you are trying to lose weight, choose an eating plan that is lower in calories.

4. Reduce sodium in your diet

- Choose foods that are low in salt and other forms of sodium
- Use spices, garlic, and onions to add flavor to your meals without adding more sodium.

5. Drink alcohol only in moderation

- In addition to raising blood pressure, too much alcohol can add unneeded calories to your diet.
- If you drink alcoholic beverages, have only a moderate amount—one drink a day for women, two drinks a day for men.

6. Take prescribed drugs as directed

- If you need drugs to help lower your blood pressure, you still must follow the lifestyle changes mentioned above.
- Use notes and other reminders to help you remember to take your drugs. Ask your family to help you with reminder phone calls and messages.



BLOOD PRESSURE LEVELS FOR ADULTS*

CATEGORY	SYSTOLIC [†] (MMHG) [‡]		DIASTOLIC [†] (MMHG) [‡]	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 changes in what you eat & drink, be physically active, & lose extra weight. If you also have diabetes, see your doctor.
Hypertension	140 or higher	or	90 or higher	You have high blood pressure. Ask your doctor or nurse how to control it.



* For adults ages 18 and older who are not on medicine for high blood pressure and do not have a short-term serious illness. *Source: The Seventh Report of the Joint National Committee on Prevention, Detection, Evaluation, and Treatment of High Blood Pressure; NIH Publication No. 03-5230, National High Blood Pressure Education Program, May 2003.*

† If systolic and diastolic pressures fall into different categories, overall status is the higher category.

‡ Millimeters of mercury.

- **What do the numbers mean?**

Blood pressure is usually measured in millimeters of mercury (mmHG) and is recorded as two numbers—systolic pressure “over” diastolic pressure. The upper number (systolic) is the force exerted against your blood vessels when your heart pumps, or beats. The lower number (diastolic) is the force on your blood vessels when your heart is relaxing between beats.

- **I don’t feel bad, so is it okay if I have high blood pressure?**

High blood pressure is often called the silent killer because people often don’t know they have it. It damages the heart and blood vessels without ever causing pain. So even if high blood pressure doesn’t make you feel bad, it is hazardous to your health.

- **Why is high blood pressure bad for you?**

High blood pressure shows that the heart is working too hard. When the heart is forced to work harder than normal, it is put under great strain. It is dangerous to have high blood pressure for a long time. It can damage the wall of the arteries and lead to clogged arteries, heart attacks, strokes and kidney problems.