



Managing High Blood Pressure

Did you know that about one out of every three Americans currently has high blood pressure (hypertension)? High blood pressure can lead to heart failure, stroke and kidney disease. The good news is that it is possible to prevent and control high blood pressure.

WHAT IS BLOOD PRESSURE?

Blood pressure is the force of blood against the walls of the arteries. Blood pressure is recorded as two numbers:

- Systolic pressure (as the heart beats)
- Diastolic pressure (as the heart relaxes between beats)

The measurement is written one above or before the other, with the systolic number on top and the diastolic number on the bottom. Normal blood pressure is less than 120 mmHg systolic and less than 80 mmHg diastolic, or less than 120/80.

WHAT IS HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE?

When the force of blood against the walls of the arteries and blood vessels is greater than 140/90, it is called hypertension or high blood pressure.

HOW DO I KNOW IF I HAVE HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE?

High blood pressure is often called the “silent killer” because it can cause damage without showing any obvious signs or symptoms. That’s why it is so important to see your doctor and have your blood pressure checked.

HOW CAN I CONTROL MY BLOOD PRESSURE?

- Be physically active
- Follow a healthy eating plan
- If you are overweight, lose weight and/or maintain a healthy weight
- Eat less sodium (salt)
- Limit your alcohol consumption
- If you smoke, stop

HOW CAN I CONTROL MY BLOOD PRESSURE?

- Monitor the amount of sodium (salt) you consume.
- Make gradual changes, like adding a serving of fruit or vegetables at lunch and dinner.
- Gradually increase your use of fat-free or low-fat dairy products to three servings per day.
- If you eat large portions of red meat, reduce the amount by a half or a third at each meal.
- Try casseroles, pasta and stir-fry dishes that contain less meat and more vegetables, grains and beans.
- Try fresh or dried fruit, raw vegetables or low-fat yogurt for snacks.

WHAT ABOUT PHYSICAL ACTIVITY?

Physical activity is one of the most important things you can do to prevent/control high blood pressure. Just 30 minutes of moderate physical activity most days of the week will help. This activity doesn't have to be completed all at once, try 15 minutes twice a day if this works better for you. Always check with your physician before you start or modify an exercise program.

Some examples of moderate exercise:

- Brisk walking (three to four miles per hour)
- Cleaning the house
- Mowing the lawn or raking leaves
- Bicycling
- Dancing

WHAT ABOUT MEDICATION TO CONTROL HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE?

Some people will need one or more medications to control their blood pressure. If you are prescribed medications, it's important to take them as directed.

Here are some tips to help you remember to take your medications:

- Take them at the same time every day and try to link them to some activity like brushing your teeth, eating or going to bed.
- Keep your pills near the kitchen table or the toothpaste.
- Use a pillbox to keep your pills organized.
- Ask for help. Family members and friends can help to remind you; in turn, you can remind them to take any medications they have been prescribed.
- If you have any side effects let your doctor know. There are many different types of medicines to treat high blood pressure. Your doctor will prescribe the one that is right for you.

Together, you and your doctor can decide a treatment plan that is right for you.

Make sure you to stick to your plan!

TOOLS & RESOURCES

From health tips and guidelines that help you stay informed, to useful online and mobile tools that help make it easier to manage your health, Independent Health has the tools and resources you need to lead a healthier life.

To learn more, visit the "My Health" section at [independenthealth.com](https://www.independenthealth.com).

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