



Hypertension/ High Blood Pressure

What is Hypertension/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 (*systolic pressure*) is the pressure when the heart beats. The bottom, or smaller, number (*diastolic pressure*) is the pressure when the heart rests between beats.

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

What can I do to improve my blood pressure?

- **Weight Reduction** - Maintain normal body weight. (BMI = 18.5 - 24.9)
- **DASH Eating Plan** - Diet rich in fruits, vegetables, low fat dairy and reduced in fat
- **Restrict Sodium Intake** - Less than 1500 mg sodium per day.
- **Physical Activity** - Be more physically active. Aim for at least 90 -150 min. of exercise per week.
- **Moderation of Alcohol Consumption** - No more than 2 drinks/day for males, and 1 drink/day for females

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/secondhand smoke exposure
- Diabetes
- Being obese or overweight
- High cholesterol
- Unhealthy diet (*high in sodium, low in potassium and drinking too much alcohol*)
- Physician 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.

How can I tell if I have HBP?

The only way to know if you have high blood pressure is to get it checked regularly. For proper diagnosis of HBP, your health care professional will use an average based on two or more readings obtained on two or more visits.

What can I do to prevent HBP?

- 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. Aim to consume less than 1,500 mg/day of sodium (*salt*).
- Eat foods rich in potassium. Aim for 3,500 – 5,000 mg of dietary potassium per day.
- Limit alcohol to no more than one drink per day if you're a woman or two drinks a day if you're a man.
- Be more physically active. Aim for 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity or at least 75 minutes of vigorous physical activity per week, or a combination of both, spread throughout the week. Add muscle-strengthening activity at least two days per week for more health benefits.
- Take medicine the way your health care professional tells you.
- Know what your blood pressure should be and work to keep it at that level.