

# BLOOD PRESSURE IS KNOWN AS THE SILENT KILLER



## ➔ Why?



High blood pressure usually has no signs or symptoms, so

many people do not realize they have it. The only way to know whether you have high blood pressure is to measure it.

## ➔ The Good News



Your blood pressure level is very much a function of lifestyle, such as how much

salt you eat, smoking, being overweight, and your frequency of physical activity. Even if you inherit the tendency to have an elevated blood pressure, you can still take effective action to protect your health.

## ➔ Exercise Helps



Regular physical activity makes your heart stronger, which means your heart can pump

more blood with less effort. Aim for 150 minutes of exercise every week, including both cardiovascular and weight training. While exercise can help control your blood pressure, eating well is another powerful way to improve your numbers.

# CONTROL YOUR BLOOD PRESSURE

Blood pressure is the force of blood pushing against blood vessel walls with each heart beat. High blood pressure, also known as hypertension, occurs when there is too much force over time. Your blood pressure rises and falls throughout the day. If it stays high for a long time, it can damage the heart muscle and the blood vessels.

## Understanding the Numbers

**Systolic** | This is the pressure your blood exerts on your blood vessels when your heart beats.

**Diastolic** | This is the pressure left in the vessels when the heart rests in between beats.

When arteries are damaged, they often become constricted and vulnerable to plaque build-up. This build-up increases the chances of a person having a stroke or heart attack.

## Blood Pressure Levels

Normal blood pressure is below 120/80 mm Hg. If one or both of your numbers are not in a healthy range, talk to your healthcare provider to determine how to best control your blood pressure.

### Normal

Systolic: less than 120 mmHg  
Diastolic: less than 80 mmHg

### At Risk (prehypertension)

Systolic: 120 - 139 mmHg  
Diastolic: 80-89 mmHg

### High

Systolic: 140 mmHg or higher  
Diastolic: 90 mmHg or higher



**Quick Tip!** Make sure to have your blood pressure checked regularly.



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# BLOOD PRESSURE STEPS TO SUCCESS



Managing your food and beverage is crucial to controlling your blood pressure. The DASH Diet encourages you to reduce the sodium in your diet and eat a variety of foods. Eating a diet filled with vegetables, fruit, whole grains, and healthy fats will help!



**EAT & DRINK HEALTHY**

**Vegetables | 4 to 5 servings a day:** Fresh and frozen vegetables are both good choices. Choose those labeled as low sodium or without salt added. Try to add an extra vegetable serving to each meal as a healthy way to boost vitamin and mineral intake.

**Fruits | 4 to 5 servings a day:** Like vegetables, fruits are packed with fiber, potassium and magnesium. Fruit is easy to grab as a snack for on the go!

***Quick Tip!** Make half of your plate filled with vegetables and fruits at every meal.*



**Whole Grains | 6 to 8 servings a day:** Rolled or steel cut oats, brown rice, barley, quinoa, whole grain bread and pasta, buckwheat, bulgar, millet, oatmeal, and plain popcorn are all healthy choices.

**Control Sodium:** Try to limit sodium to less than 2,300 mg per day. One teaspoon of table salt has 2,325 mg of sodium! Also try to use sodium-free spices, rinse canned foods to remove some of the sodium, buy foods labeled "no salt added."

**Manage Weight:** Losing even 10 pounds can help lower your blood pressure! Watch portion sizes, use smaller plates, slow your eating, all can help with managing weight.

## ➔ **Stress Well.**

Think of each day as an opportunity to make healthy decisions that can support your blood pressure goals.

**Manage Stress:** Your body produces a surge of hormones when you are in a stressful situation. These hormones increase blood pressure by causing your heart to beat faster and blood vessels to narrow. Your reaction to stressful situations in unhealthy ways can increase your risk of high blood pressure.

***Quick Tip!** Take deep, slow breaths, exercise, simplify your schedule, get plenty of sleep, and shift your perspective are all healthy ways to manage stress.*



**Quit Smoking:** Nicotine raises your blood pressure and heart rate, narrows your arteries and hardens their walls, and makes your blood more likely to clot.

**Limit Alcohol:** Drinking too much alcohol can increase blood pressure. The Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends that men limit alcohol to no more than 2 drinks a day and women to one or less.

Contact your healthcare provider for more information and to discuss your individual lifestyle habits today!