

Prevent and Control High Blood Pressure: Mission Possible



▶▶ What every young adult should know



Know your numbers

High blood pressure is called “the silent killer” because there are often no symptoms. Your numbers are your only warning.

Normal blood pressure

the pressure of blood in the vessels when the heart beats: **systolic pressure**

less than
120/80 mmHg

millimeters of mercury

the pressure between beats when the heart relaxes: **diastolic pressure**



High blood pressure
140/90 mmHg or higher

Prehypertension
between 120-139 and/or 80-89 mmHg

Normal blood pressure
less than 120/80 mmHg

High blood pressure: A force to be reckoned with

High blood pressure (also called hypertension) is a life-threatening condition that affects 1 in every 4 Americans over age 18.

- Anyone can get it, and as you get older, the odds of your developing it increase, especially if you are overweight or obese or have diabetes. That is why it is so important to take steps early in life to prevent it.
- High blood pressure can lead to other life-threatening illnesses, including the #1, #3, and #9 causes of death in the United States: heart disease, stroke, and kidney disease.
- High blood pressure is a major cause of complications in pregnancy.

The good news is that high blood pressure can be prevented.

Enlist in this vital mission for a healthier you



U.S. Department of
Health and Human Services



8 things you can do to prevent high blood pressure (They also help you look and feel good.)

- 1. Lose weight if you are overweight and maintain a healthy weight.** Limit portion sizes, especially of high calorie foods, and try to eat only as many calories as you burn each day—or less if you want to lose weight.
- 2. Eat heart healthfully.** Follow an eating plan that emphasizes fruits, vegetables, and low fat dairy products and is moderate in total fat and low in saturated fat and cholesterol.
- 3. Reduce salt and sodium intake.** Read food labels to choose canned, processed, and convenience foods that are lower in sodium. Limit sodium intake to no more than 2,400 mg, or about 1 teaspoon's worth, of salt each day. Avoid fast foods that are high in salt and sodium.
- 4. If you drink alcoholic beverages, do so in moderation.** For men, that means a maximum of 2 drinks a day, for women, a maximum of 1.
- 5. Become more physically active.** Work up to at least 30 minutes of a moderate-level activity, such as brisk walking or bicycling, each day. If you don't have 30 minutes, try to find two 15-minute periods or even three 10-minute periods for physical activity.
- 6. Quit smoking.** Smoking increases your chances of developing a stroke, heart disease, peripheral arterial disease, and several forms of cancer.
- 7. Talk with your health care professional.** Ask what your blood pressure numbers are and ask what they mean.
- 8. Take medication as prescribed.** If you need medication, make sure you understand what it's for and how and when to take it, then take it as your doctor recommends.

Resources to help you stay healthy

Your Guide to Lowering High Blood Pressure includes information on how to detect, prevent, and treat high blood pressure. Features the DASH eating plan, which has been shown to prevent and lower high blood pressure, and information specifically for women.

<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/hbp/index.html>

Aim for a Healthy Weight includes a BMI calculator, tips for shopping and preparing food, and a menu planner that is designed to guide daily food and meal choices based on one day's calorie allowance.

http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/lose_wt/index.htm

Live Healthier, Live Longer includes interactive materials for people with heart disease and those who want to prevent it.

<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/chd/index.htm>

NHLBI Health Information Center

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