

Prevent and Control High Blood Pressure: Mission Possible



▶ What every African American 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 120-39 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) increases your chances of having a heart attack, heart failure, stroke, kidney disease, and other life-threatening illnesses. Anyone can get it, and as you get older, the likelihood of your developing high blood pressure increases, especially if you are overweight or obese or have diabetes.

African Americans are most likely to develop high blood pressure than any other racial or ethnic group.

For African Americans, high blood pressure:

- Tends to be more common and more severe
- Happens at an earlier age
- Is a leading cause of death for people with type 2 diabetes
- Is the major reason why African Americans are 8 times more likely to develop kidney failure than Caucasians
- Is a major reason why African Americans die at an earlier age

The good news is that high blood pressure can be controlled. Better yet, it can be prevented.

Enlist in this vital mission for a healthier you



U.S. Department of
Health and Human Services



9 things

you can do to prevent and control high blood pressure

- 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 2400 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 2 15-minute periods or even 3 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. If you are pregnant, make sure you are under a doctor's care.** High blood pressure is a major cause of complications in pregnancy.
- 8. Talk with your health care professional.** Ask what your blood pressure numbers are and what they mean.
- 9. 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>

Improving Cardiovascular Health in African Americans. Package of seven easy-to-read booklets designed to help you reduce your chances of having a heart attack or stroke. <http://www.nhlbi.gov/health/public/heart/other/chdblack/index.htm>

Heart-Healthy Home Cooking African-American Style includes 20 tested recipes that show you how to cut back on saturated fat, cholesterol, salt and sodium, and still have great-tasting food. Delicious foods from spicy southern barbecued chicken to sweet potato pie are included. <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/other/chdblack/cooking.htm>

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>



National High Blood Pressure
Education Program

