

ABCs of Health



High Blood Pressure

AWARENESS...

Blood pressure is the force of blood against the walls of the arteries. Blood pressure rises and falls during the day. When blood pressure stays elevated over time, its called high blood pressure*

There are **no warning signs of HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE!** You can feel fine and still have a dangerously high blood pressure. It does not hurt, and you won't feel sick, dizzy, or nervous. A normal blood pressure for most people is below 120/80*

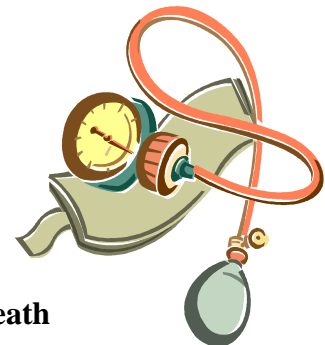
Risk factors beyond your control are:

- Family history of heart disease (having a mother or sister who has been diagnosed with heart disease before age 65, or a father or brother diagnosed before age 55) or family history of stroke*
- Age (55 years and older for men and 65 years or older for women)*

BEHAVIOR...

High blood pressure can cause:

- strokes
- heart attacks
- kidney disease
- blindness
- death



You can **decrease** your chances of getting **high blood pressure** or making it worse by:

- **Quitting Smoking.**
- Maintaining a **healthy weight.**
- Getting 30 minutes of moderate **physical activity** most days of the week.
- Having **no more than two** drinks of beer, wine, or hard liquor each day.
- Avoiding, or at least **decreasing, stress.**
- Reducing **salt** and **sodium** in your diet.

CHANGE...

High blood pressure cannot be cured, but you and your doctor can help you **control or prevent** it by following these suggestions:

1. **Stop Smoking or better yet, never start!** Each time you smoke a cigarette, you temporarily raise your blood pressure by 10 to 20 points.
2. **Lose weight if you are overweight.**
3. **Use less salt.** You can greatly reduce your salt intake if you:
 - ◆ Use less salt in cooking.
 - ◆ Leave the salt shaker off the table.
 - ◆ Use spices (garlic, pepper, lemon juice) and herbs (parsley, sage, mint) instead of canned soups, salt, or soy sauce to season foods.
 - ◆ Use fresh fruits and vegetables instead of canned.
 - ◆ When cooking, use fresh meats and fish instead of canned, salted or precooked products.



4. **Be physically active!** Start slow and work up to at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity on most days of the week. (See a doctor before starting any physical activity program)
5. **Limit your alcohol use** to one or two drinks per day.
6. **If prescribed, take your blood pressure pills regularly** until your doctor tells you to stop. Blood pressure pills won't work if you don't take them **every** day.



Also:

- Take your pill at the same time every day.
- Leave notes to remind yourself to take your pill or have someone remind you to take it.
- Take your pills with you when leaving home.
- Talk with your doctor if you think your pills are making you feel sick, or if you have side effects.



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Publication Number: E10-15F

