

The Wellness News

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All About Blood Pressure

High blood pressure, also known as hypertension, is a major problem in the United States and affects 1 in 3 adults. High blood pressure can have little or no symptoms, causing people to think they are healthy when they are actually just unaware of their current blood pressure. Being undiagnosed for dangerous blood pressure levels can cause damage to one's heart, blood vessels, kidneys, and other parts of the body. This damage can cause serious health issues, including heart failure, coronary heart disease, stroke, and kidney failure.

Know the Facts About Blood Pressure:

Blood pressure measures the force of blood pushing on the arterial walls. Oxygen is carried through the body by your blood and is vital to human life. The blood vessels and capillaries are your body's highway system and are driven by the heart with two different pressures, systolic and diastolic. The **systolic** pressure is when the beating heart is pumping blood and the **diastolic** pressure is when the heart is at rest in between beats. Blood pressure is read with the systolic pressure over the diastolic pressure and is measured in mmHG (millimeters of mercury).

What Does High Blood Pressure Mean?

High blood pressure indicates that one or both of these forces are pushing too hard and too often against the arterial walls. The arteries are made of muscle and semi-flexible tissue that stretches like elastic when blood is pumped through them (similar to stretching out a rubber band). The more it becomes stretched, the looser it becomes, causing it to eventually break. This is what happens when the pressure against the arterial walls becomes too high. The walls, over a long period of time, have had to loosen and stretch out in order for the blood to make its way through the highway system. This stretching has weakened them to dangerous levels, making someone more prone to stroke and aneurysms.

Your blood pressure lowers during sleep and rises with physical activity, stress, excitement or nervousness. Any level above 120/80 raises your risk of developing pre-hypertension and hypertension. Currently, there has been no definite number for a blood pressure level that is too low.

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The Scoop on Salt

For *some* people, sodium intake is a concern regarding high blood pressure. These people are considered “salt sensitive.” This does not mean that if you stop salting your food, you are reducing your total sodium intake enough. Up to 75 percent of sodium intake comes from hidden processed foods such as tomato sauce, soups, canned foods, condiments, and prepared mixes, *not* the table salt you put on your food.

What Can You Do?

Be a conscious consumer and read food labels. Look for the ingredients that say salt, sodium or soda and see how much sodium there is per serving under the nutritional facts. Your sodium intake should be no more than 1,500 milligrams per day, as recommended by the American Heart Association.

Preventing and Lowering High Blood Pressure

Preventing and reducing high blood pressure can be done through healthy nutrition and exercise habits. Following some of the suggestions below will help you create a healthier lifestyle.

Healthy Blood Pressure Tips:

- Eat a healthy diet, including reducing your salt intake
- Consider following the DASH diet (<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/dash-diet/HI00047>)
- Limit processed foods
- Enjoy regular physical activity
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Manage stress
- Avoid tobacco smoke
- Understand hot tub safety
- Follow medication prescriptions
- Limit alcohol consumption
- Try yoga or meditation
- Visit your doctor regularly

Categories for Blood Pressure Levels in Adults (mmHg)

*Ranges apply to most adults over the age of 18 who have no serious illness

Category	Systolic (top number)		Diastolic (bottom number)
Normal	Less than 120	<i>And</i>	Less than 80
Pre-hypertension	120–139	<i>Or</i>	80–89
High blood pressure:			
Stage 1	140–159	<i>Or</i>	90–99
Stage 2	160 or higher	<i>Or</i>	100 or higher

Call Your Health Coach for More Information 1-888-493-5522

Sources:

<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/hbp/>

http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/Conditions/HighBloodPressure/PreventionTreatmentofHighBloodPressure/Prevention-Treatment-of-High-Blood-Pressure_UCM_002054_Article.jsp