



Things to Know About High Blood Pressure (Hypertension)

Blood pressure is the pressure that your blood puts on the walls of your arteries. An artery is a blood vessel (tube) that carries blood from your heart to the rest of your body.

High blood pressure, also called **hypertension**, is when the force of your blood pressing against your artery walls is too high. High blood pressure usually has no symptoms. You may not know you have it until your blood pressure is tested.

It's important to have your blood pressure checked because high blood pressure can cause problems, such as:

- Damage to your heart
- Stroke
- Vision loss
- Kidney disease
- Erectile dysfunction (problems getting hard for sex)



Understanding the Numbers

Blood pressure is measured and written as one number over another.

118
— mm Hg
77

The top number is your **systolic blood pressure**, which measures how much pressure your blood puts on your artery walls when your heart beats.

The bottom number is your **diastolic blood pressure**. It measures how much pressure your blood is putting on your artery walls when your heart rests between beats.

One or both of these numbers can be too high. If they're too high, you may have hypertension. The chart below shows the ranges for healthy and unhealthy blood pressure levels.

Systolic	Under 120	120 to 139	130 to 139	140 or higher	Over 180
	and	and	or	or	and/or
Diastolic	Under 80	Under 80	80 to 89	90 or higher	Over 120
Status	Normal	Elevated	High Blood Pressure Stage 1	High Blood Pressure Stage 2	Hypertensive Crisis Emergency

Know Your Risk

Certain things increase a person's chances of having high blood pressure. These things are called risk factors. There are some risk factors that you can't do anything about. For example, if you have family related to you by blood who have high blood pressure, you are more likely to have it too. Your risk for high blood pressure also increases as you get older. Your race and ethnicity may also impact your risk for high blood pressure. For example, if you're African American, you are more likely to develop high blood pressure, and you're likely to develop it younger than people from other racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Make Healthy Habits



Eat a healthy diet. Include lots of fruits and vegetables, low-fat dairy products, and fiber.

- Do not eat foods high in fat, such as fatty cuts of meat (pork belly), solid fats (lard or margarine), fried foods, or sweets like desserts and candy.
- Limit the amount of caffeine you eat and drink. Remember that caffeine is also found in some foods like dark chocolate and drinks such as tea and soda.
- Eat foods low in sodium (salt). Most people should eat less than 2 grams of sodium per day, but talk with your doctor about the amount that's right for you.
- Eat more foods with potassium. Potassium is found in foods like bananas, potatoes, beans, and yogurt.



Lose weight, if you're overweight.



Do something active for 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week. You can do it all at once, such as a 30 minute bike ride, or break it up, such as 10 minutes of dancing or walking 3 times in a day.



Don't drink more than 1 alcoholic drink per day if you're female and 2 drinks per day if you're male.

One drink can be a can of beer, a glass of wine, or a shot of liquor. If you're transgender and have questions, talk to your healthcare provider.



If you smoke, **quit or cut down how much you smoke.** For help, call the NY Quitline at 866-697-8487.

Talk with Your Healthcare Provider

Sometimes making healthy choices is not enough to keep blood pressure under control. Remember to have your blood pressure checked regularly, and talk with your doctor about whether medicines are right for you.

For More Information

To learn more, take a picture of the code with your phone or tablet:



English:

How to Prevent
High Blood Pressure
<http://tiny.cc/3tymuz>

Español:

Prevención de la
presión arterial alta
<http://tiny.cc/2tymuz>



Memorial Sloan Kettering
Cancer Center

Immigrant Health and Cancer Disparities Service

Towards Equity in Health