



BLOOD PRESSURE

What is it and how do I control it?



WHAT IS BLOOD PRESSURE?

Blood pressure is a measure of the pressure of the blood in the circulatory system. It is composed of two numbers - systolic and Diastolic blood pressure.

- **Systolic** - When your heart beats, it squeezes and pushes blood through your arteries to the rest of your body. This force creates pressure on those blood vessels that help move the blood throughout your body. **A normal systolic blood pressure is below 120.**
- **Diastolic** - The pressure in the arteries when the heart rests is the bottom number on the reading. This is the time when the heart fills with blood and receives oxygen. **A normal diastolic blood pressure is lower than 80.**

BLOOD PRESSURE CATEGORY	SYSTOLIC MMHG (UPPER #)		DIASTOLIC MM HG (LOWER #)
LOW BLOOD PRESSURE (HYPOTENSION)	LESS THAN 80	or	LESS THAN 60
NORMAL	80 - 120	and	Less than 80
PREHYPERTENSION	120 - 129	or	Less than 80
HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE (HYPERTENSION STAGE 1)	130 - 139	or	80 - 89
HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE (HYPERTENSION STAGE 2)	140 OR HIGHER	or	90 OR HIGHER
SIGNIFICANTLY ELEVATED (AT RISK FOR HYPERTENSIVE CRISIS)	HIGHER THAN 180	or	HIGHER THAN 110

HOW CAN I LOWER MY BLOOD PRESSURE?

The changes listed below might sound like a lot, but don't worry - you don't have to change everything all at once. Choose one specific thing to change and try doing it consistently for a while. If it works for you, keep doing it until it becomes a habit. If it doesn't work for you, choose something else to try - don't give up!

- **Lose weight** - To lose weight, you have to either eat less or move more - if you do both of those things, it's even better!
- **Healthy Diet** - There is no single diet that is right for everyone. It is important to limit or avoid sugar, meats, and refined grains (found in white bread, white rice, most forms of pasta and most packaged snack foods). In general, a healthy diet can include:
 - Fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.
 - Beans, peas, lentils, chickpeas, and similar foods.
 - Walnuts, almonds, and unsalted peanuts.
 - Fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products
- **Decrease salt (sodium) intake** - Many people think that eating a low-sodium diet means avoiding the salt shaker and not adding salt when cooking. The truth is, not adding salt will only help a little - almost all the sodium you eat is already in the food you buy at the grocery store or at restaurants. Avoiding processed foods is the best way to reduce salt intake!
- **Avoid excessive alcohol** - the CDC suggests that a woman not have more than one standard drink of alcohol a day, and a man not have more than 2 standard drinks of alcohol a day:
 - 12 ounces of beer, 8-9 fl oz of malt liquor, 5 ounce glass of wine, 1.5 ounces of distilled spirits (gin, rum, tequila, vodka, whiskey, etc.)
- **Regular physical activity** - start out walking short distances a couple times a day and building up to 30 minutes of continuous walking most days of the week.