



Additional Resource:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
<https://www.cdc.gov/bloodpressure/facts.htm>

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*This is an informational series designed to provide
specific ideas for a healthy and safe lifestyle.*

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High Blood Pressure: What You Should Know

*According to recent estimates,
nearly one in three U.S. adults
has high blood pressure,
but because there are no
symptoms, nearly one-third of
these people don't know they
have it. In fact, many people
have high blood pressure for
years without knowing it.*



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Uncontrolled high blood pressure can lead to stroke, heart attack, heart failure or kidney failure. This is why high blood pressure is often called the “silent killer.” The only way to tell if you have high blood pressure is to have your blood pressure checked.

What do the numbers mean?

Blood pressure is really two measurements, separated by a slash when written down, such as 120/80. You may also hear someone say a blood pressure is “120 over 80.”

The first number is the systolic blood pressure. This is the peak blood pressure when your heart is squeezing blood out. The second number is the diastolic blood pressure. It’s the pressure when your heart is filling with blood — relaxing between beats.

Blood Pressure Category	Systolic (mm Hg)		Diastolic (mm Hg)
Normal	< 120	and	< 80
Elevated	120-129	and	< 80
High			
Stage 1	130-139	or	80-89
Stage 2	≥ 140	or	≥ 90
Hypertensive Crisis*	> 180	and/ or	> 120

* Patients needing prompt changes in medication if there are no other indications of problems, or immediate hospitalization if there are signs of organ damage.



What can I do about it?

The first thing to do is to have your blood pressure checked. If you have high blood pressure, you can do a lot to reduce it. Work with your doctor to determine the best treatment for you.

- Lose weight if you’re overweight.
- Eat healthy meals low in saturated fat, trans fat, cholesterol and salt.
- Limit alcohol to no more than one drink per day for women or two drinks a day for men.
- Be more physically active. Exercise at least 30 minutes on most or all days of the week.
- Take medicine the way your doctor tells you.
- Know what your blood pressure should be and work to keep it at that level.

Simple lifestyle changes can reduce your risk for conditions associated with high blood pressure, such as heart attack and stroke.