

HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE

BLOOD PRESSURE is a measure of how hard your blood pushes against your arteries as it moves through your body. Blood pressure rises and falls naturally during the day. But if it stays too high, over time it can lead to health problems, such as a heart attack, stroke or heart failure. High blood pressure is also called hypertension.

Often, there may be no signs or symptoms that tell you when your blood pressure is too high. The good news: High blood pressure can be treated or even prevented.

▶ What the Numbers Mean

Blood pressure is given as two numbers. Systolic blood pressure is the top number, and diastolic blood pressure is the bottom number. Under new guidelines, high blood pressure is now defined as 130 mmHg/80 mmHg or greater. Normal blood pressure is less than 120 mmHg/80 mmHg.

Research shows that lower blood pressure goals improve heart health.

Lifestyle changes are the main treatment for those with elevated (120-129 mmHg/<80 mmHg) or stage 1 high blood pressure (130-139 mmHg/80-89 mmHg). They are also important in treating individuals with stage 2 high blood pressure (>140 mmHg/>90 mmHg) and for good health overall.





▶ Lifestyle Changes to Lower Your Blood Pressure

-  Lose weight, if needed, and maintain a healthy body weight.
-  Focus on healthy eating: Follow the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) diet, high in fruits, vegetables, and low-fat dairy.
-  Cut the amount of salt (sodium) you eat. For people with high blood pressure or at risk for it, less than 1,500 mg per day is often the goal.
-  Eat potassium-rich foods, such as sweet potatoes, spinach, bananas.
-  Get regular physical activity.
-  Limit alcohol (no more than one drink per day for women, two drinks per day for men).









HOW MUCH SALT?





-  1/4 tsp salt = 575 mg sodium
-  1/2 tsp salt = 1,150 mg sodium
-  3/4 tsp salt = 1,725 mg sodium
-  1 tsp salt = 2,300 mg sodium

Lifestyle changes can be hard to do every day, but they can go a long way to lowering your blood pressure.

LIFESTYLE CHANGE	RECOMMENDATION	LOWERS SYSTOLIC BLOOD PRESSURE (TOP NUMBER)
 Lose weight	- Maintain a normal body weight - For those who are overweight, aim to lose at least 1 kg	2-5 mmHg; expect to lower systolic blood pressure 1 mmHg per kg lost
 Follow DASH diet	Eat lots of fruits, vegetables, low-fat dairy	3-11 mmHg
 Reduce salt	Aim for less than 1,500 mg per day	2-6 mmHg
 Boost potassium	Aim for 3,500 mg-5,000 mg per day	2-5 mmHg
 Be more active	90-150 minutes of aerobic exercise per week	2-8 mmHg
 Limit alcohol	For men, less than 2 drinks daily; for women, less than 1	3-4 mmHg

▶ Role of Medicine

Some people also will need one or more blood pressure-lowering medications to help control their blood pressure. For example:

-  People with stage 1 high blood pressure who are likely to develop cardiovascular disease or other known risk factors such as chronic kidney disease or diabetes
-  People with stage 2 hypertension (140 mmHg/90 mmHg or greater)

You may need multiple medications, especially if your numbers are very much above your goal.



▶ Bottom Line

Lowering your blood pressure can save your life.

Changes to lower your blood pressure are not always easy, but they are achievable. Work with your care team to develop a treatment plan that is right for you.



Information provided for educational purposes only. Please consult your health care provider about your specific health needs.

▶ Go to **[CardioSmart.org/HighBP](https://www.CardioSmart.org/HighBP)** to learn more about High Blood Pressure.