

HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE



WHAT IS HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE?

Blood pressure is the force of blood against the walls of arteries. Blood pressure changes throughout the day. However, when blood pressure remains high over time, it is called high blood pressure or hypertension. High blood pressure is a chronic problem that can be treated, but not cured. It is often called the **silent killer** because many times there are no symptoms.

HOW IS BLOOD PRESSURE MEASURED?

Blood pressure is described as two numbers-- the systolic pressure (as the heart beats) over the diastolic pressure (as the heart relaxes between beats). A consistent blood pressure reading of 140/90 mm Hg or higher is considered high blood pressure. Both numbers in a blood pressure test are important.

CATEGORIES FOR BLOOD PRESSURE IN ADULTS (OVER THE AGE OF 18)*

CATEGORY	SYSTOLIC (mm Hg)	DIASTOLIC (mm Hg)
Normal	Less than 120	Less than 80
Prehypertension	120- 139	80 - 89
Stage 1 Hypertension	140 - 159	90 99
Stage 2 Hypertension	Greater than 160	Greater than 100

*National High Blood Pressure Education Program JNC 7 Report

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- **Check Your Blood Pressure**

Have your blood pressure checked at least four times each year. Your physician may prefer that it be checked more frequently. You can purchase blood pressure monitoring equipment for use at home, if your blood pressure fluctuates or is difficult to control.



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- **Limit The Amount Of Sodium In Your Diet**

The current recommendation is to consume less than 2,400 milligrams (mg) of sodium daily. This includes, not only table salt, but also sodium in processed foods. Your healthcare provider may advise eating less sodium than 2400 mg. Do not use salt substitutes without checking with your healthcare provider. Consider purchasing *Cooking for a Lifetime Cookbook* with over 300 recipes with lower amounts of salt and fat.*
- **Maintain An Ideal Body Weight**

Every extra pound of body weight requires that the heart pump blood through more arterioles and capillaries. Maintaining your weight reduces the amount of work your heart has to do.
- **Participate In Regular Aerobic Exercise**

Adding 20 - 30 minutes of walking three to four times a week is a great way to stay fit. Gradually progress to a goal of 30 minutes of walking three to four times a week is a great way to stay fit. Always check with your healthcare provider before starting any exercise program. Consider purchasing a pedometer to help you meet your walking goals.*
- **Stop Smoking**

Smoking affects high blood pressure and speeds up the process of atherosclerosis more than any other factor.
- **Limit The Use Of Caffeine And Alcohol**

Caffeine drinks and alcoholic beverages increase the heart rate. There is growing evidence that even moderate drinking may elevate blood pressure.
- **Take Your Medication**

If your physician has prescribed medications, follow their directions. If you have any side effects, contact their office immediately. Do not discontinue taking the medication until another one is prescribed unless you have contact with your healthcare provider.
- **Control Stress Your Life**

Stress can make blood pressure go up for a while, and it has been thought to contribute to high blood pressure. But the long-term effects of stress are as yet unclear. Stress management techniques do not seem to prevent high blood pressure. However, such techniques may have other benefits, such as making you feel better or helping you to control over-eating.

*For more information on purchasing the *Cooking for a Lifetime Cookbook* or a pedometer, call The Care Group at (317) 338-6080.

