



Lower Systolic Blood Pressure

Goal: Lower systolic blood pressure

What is Blood Pressure?

Blood pressure is defined as the force with which blood pumps through the body. High blood pressure, also known as *hypertension*, places an extra burden on your heart and blood vessels.

120 ← Systolic pressure (pressure when the heart is pumping) in mmHg
80 ← Diastolic pressure (pressure when the heart is resting) in mmHg

High blood pressure usually has no symptoms and is often referred to as the silent killer.

More than 70% of adults age 60 and over suffer from high blood pressure, making it a very common condition.

National Center for Health Statistics, Trends in Healthy Americans. Health, United States, 2006

Controlling systolic blood pressure is important as we age. The best blood pressure is the level at which your risk is lowest. Lower systolic blood pressure to a healthy range determined by your physician.

Hypertension is an important risk factor for:

**Heart Attack
Stroke
Age-Related Dementia
Memory Loss
Kidney Failure
Congestive Heart Failure**

Modifiable Risk Factors for High Blood Pressure

- Obesity
- High-Sodium Diet
- Inactivity
- Tobacco Use
- Drinking Alcohol

Non-Modifiable Risk Factors

- Race
- Age
- Heredity

High blood pressure is a serious condition requiring lifelong treatment. It is possible to lower blood pressure with lifestyle changes and medication.

Take Action

You can lower
your blood pressure!

Step 1: Know and record your numbers

Monitor your blood pressure over time and **record** your numbers on a wallet card or personal health record. Work with your physician to determine your individual blood pressure goal.

Step 2: Discuss your blood pressure with your doctor

Be Prepared: Know your numbers and always take your records with you to your appointments.

Ask Questions: Ask the doctor to explain your numbers and give you specific recommendations for lifestyle changes and medications, if needed.

Share Your Point of View: Discuss your concerns and plan of lifestyle changes with your doctor.



Source: ©Microsoft Office
Online, Clip Art, Blood
Pressure Equipment

Step 3: Modify your lifestyle

Maintain a Healthy Weight: If overweight, set a weight loss goal.

Be Physically Active: Engage in at least 30 minutes of physical activity most days of the week.

Follow a Heart Healthy Eating Plan: Limit saturated fat, consume five or more fruits and vegetables per day, and choose low-fat or fat-free dairy products.

Reduce Sodium in Your Diet: Choose fewer processed foods and read labels in order to purchase foods with less than 120 mg sodium serving, for a total of less than 1500 mg a day.

Drink Alcohol in Moderation: If you drink alcoholic beverages, limit to one drink a day for women or two drinks a day for men.

Stop Smoking or Using Tobacco

Manage the Stress in Your Life

Step 4: If medication is prescribed, take it as directed

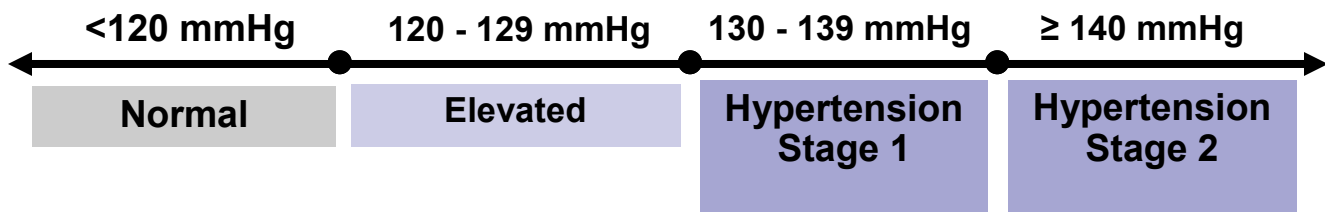
For the best blood pressure control, combine lifestyle habits and medications. Many individuals will require several different medications to lower blood pressure. Most have few side effects and a number of them are low cost.

More Information About Blood Pressure

Inform

Blood pressure is measured in millimeters of mercury (mmHg). This is a standard unit of pressure just as an inch is a standard unit of distance.

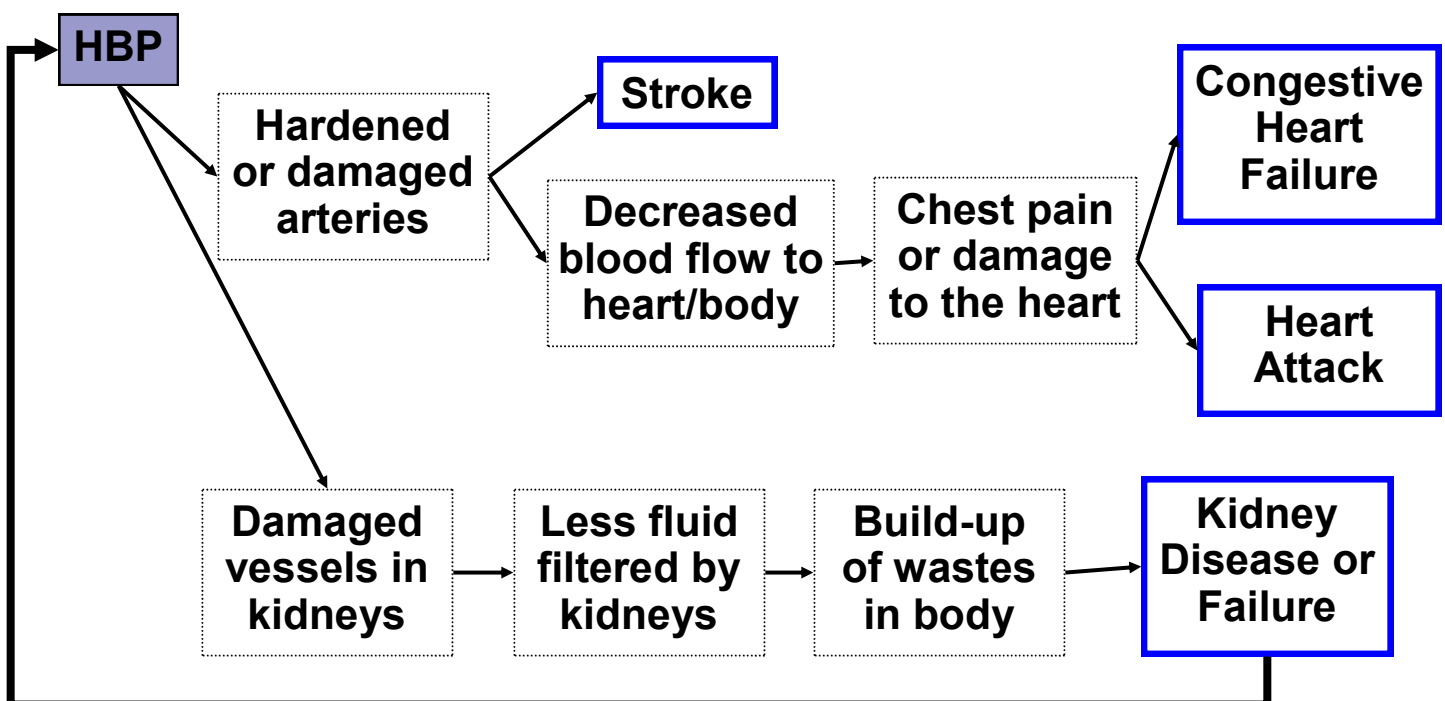
Systolic Blood Pressure Levels



Source: Whelton et al. Hypertension, Nov, 2017.

Motivate

High Blood Pressure (HBP) is a risk factor for many diseases



More Information About Blood Pressure

Encourage Action

Monitor your blood pressure between physician visits

Take advantage of free blood pressure screenings that are offered by health care facilities, pharmacies, gyms, or local community centers. If your blood pressure is high, ask your doctor about getting a home monitor.

Talk to your doctor

- Write down your questions before your visit and take them with you.
- Ask your doctor to review your personal risk factors.
- Review your blood pressure records.
- Discuss lifestyle changes that may help improve or maintain your blood pressure.
- Understand that medications may be needed.
- Ask about your current medications:
 - What side effects should I be aware of?
 - Is there a less expensive alternative?
- Ask about any physical activity and dietary recommendations or limitations.

Take your medication as prescribed

Taking your medications as prescribed can prevent a heart attack, stroke, and congestive heart failure. These are serious conditions in which blood flow is blocked. Make taking your medicine part of your daily routine so you don't forget.



Source: ©Microsoft Office
Online, Clip Art, Pills

- Take medications at the same time every day (coordinate with meals or other daily events)
- Use a pill box to organize and remind you
- Use a calendar to cross off doses after they are taken
- Leave notes out to remind yourself
- Ask family and friends to remind you
- Make sure you keep a daily dose with you when you travel or make a day trip
- Call your pharmacy for a refill before you run out of medicine, or sign up for automatic refills
- Keep pills in an obvious place that you see every day—like on your nightstand or on the kitchen table

More Information About Blood Pressure

Encourage Action

Modify Your Lifestyle: Lifestyle changes are important even if medications are prescribed.

Maintain a Healthy Weight

Maintain a healthy body weight. Losing just 10 pounds, if you are overweight, can lower your blood pressure.

Be Physically Active

At least 30 minutes of physical activity on most days of the week can help you prevent or control high blood pressure.

Reduce Sodium in Your Diet



Source: ©Microsoft Office Online, Clip

- Most sodium comes from salt added during processing.
- Taste food before salting. As you use less salt, foods will begin to taste salty. Over time you will prefer foods with less salt.
- Buy fresh, frozen, or canned “with no salt added” vegetables.
- Use herbs, spices, and salt-free seasoning blends in cooking and at the table.
- “Convenience” foods are often high in sodium and fat. Read labels and choose the brands with lower sodium and fat. Cut back on frozen dinners, pizza, packaged mixes, canned soups, and salad dressings since these can be high in salt.
- Rinse canned foods, such as tuna or vegetables, to remove some sodium.

Drink Alcohol in Moderation

In addition to raising blood pressure, alcohol adds calories to your diet that can prevent weight loss. Limit to up to 1 drink a day for women, up to 2 drinks for men.

Stop Smoking or Using Tobacco

Smoking raises your blood pressure and can cause scarring in the blood vessels, which further limits blood flow. Additives in smokeless tobacco will also cause your **blood vessels to narrow**, raising your blood pressure.

Manage the Stress in Your Life

Stress is not a proven risk factor for hypertension, but stressful situations can cause a temporary increase in blood pressure. Managing your stress level is important for your overall wellness.

Systolic Blood Pressure

Sharing the Wealth on Health

Tips for Promoting Healthy Blood Pressure

- When asked to bring a food item to an event or potluck, bring fresh fruit or vegetables, unsalted pretzels, or a healthy, homemade lower-sodium dish. Encourage others to do the same.
- When you speak with friends who are considering increasing their daily activity level, encourage them to make small changes, such as parking farther from their destination. Small changes can lead to big improvements.
- Try to share what you've learned with community leaders who can help you get your message out.
- Encourage others to take their blood pressure monitors to their doctors for calibration. Calibration keeps the blood pressure monitor readings correct.



Source: ©Microsoft Office
Online, Clip Art, Blood Pressure

Ideas for Promoting Healthy Blood Pressure

Systolic Blood Pressure

Personal Goals & Action Steps

My Current Blood Pressure: _____

My Personal Blood Pressure Goals: _____



Source: ©Microsoft
Office Online, Clip
Art, Blood Pressure

Steps Toward Attaining My Goals

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Systolic Blood Pressure

Take-Home Assignment #1

Find a place in your community where you can get your blood pressure checked. This may be an automated machine at a pharmacy or a free service at a clinic. Go to this place and have your blood pressure taken. Write down your blood pressure on your wallet card.

How was your experience? What suggestions do you have for others?

Talk to a friend or family member about blood pressure. Ask them if they know their blood pressure number. Write out what you want to say before you meet. Use the blood pressure handout as a reference.

"I am taking a class on healthy aging. May I talk to you about blood pressure and its risk factors?"

How did the conversation go? What would you do differently next time?

Systolic Blood Pressure

Take-Home Assignment #2

Look through your kitchen cupboards and pull out four different foods that you eat during a typical week. List these foods and their sodium content on the chart below. Take this page with you to the grocery store.

The next time you go grocery shopping, pick a day when you will have time to read and compare food labels. Purchase food items that are similar to the ones you have at home, but that have less sodium. List their sodium content once you get home. Compare them to the ones in your cupboard. How much sodium did you cut out by using the low sodium option? Remember that you should have less than 1500 mg of sodium per day.

Type of food from your kitchen	Sodium in kitchen foods	Sodium in low salt food	Sodium cut
Example: Canned Peas	380 mg	125 mg	255 mg
Cereal:	mg	mg	mg
Salad Dressing:	mg	mg	mg
Canned Soup:	mg	mg	mg
Frozen Dinner:	mg	mg	mg

Use your lower-sodium foods to prepare a favorite food or recipe. Invite some friends and family over to sample your lower-sodium creations. If you don't tell them it's lower sodium, they will never know!

This dinner party is a good opportunity to discuss with your guests the importance of reducing sodium intake. The meal you have prepared will serve as a great example of how easy and enjoyable lower sodium choices can be.



Source: ©Microsoft Office Online, Clip Art, Soup

Systolic Blood Pressure

Frequently Asked Questions

Can my systolic blood pressure be too low?

Yes, if your systolic (top) blood pressure is consistently below 90 mmHg and is causing problems such as fainting or dizziness, you should contact your doctor. There are many reasons for “low” blood pressure and your doctor will investigate the cause.

How does sodium affect blood pressure?

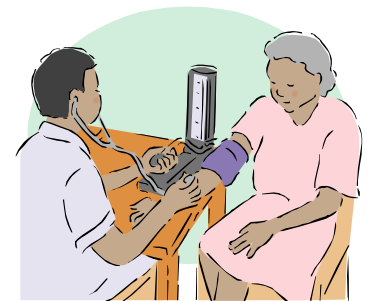
Eating too much sodium causes the body to retain fluid. This extra fluid places added pressure on the arteries, which causes your blood pressure to rise. Most Americans eat more than double the recommended level of sodium.

How does physical activity help lower my blood pressure?

Regular physical activity helps to maintain a healthy weight, and makes your heart stronger. A strong heart can pump blood with less effort, which in turn is less pressure on your arteries.

Why does blood pressure increase with age?

As people age, their blood vessels become less elastic. This causes the heart to work harder, which in turn increases blood pressure. This manner of aging is common, but it is not inevitable. In many people, it can be prevented through healthy lifestyle choices.



Source: ©Microsoft Office Online, Clip Art, Blood Pressure

Why do I have to keep taking my blood pressure medication if my blood pressure is normal again?

Your blood pressure is in the “normal” range because the medication is working to control it. Keep taking your pills to keep your blood pressure controlled. Do not change your medication without talking to your doctor.

The questions I still have about blood pressure are: _____
