



# high blood pressure

# Hypertension

As your heart beats, it forces blood through your arteries. This force is your blood pressure. If the pressure is too high, it is called hypertension (HTN) or high blood pressure. HTN is dangerous because you may have it and not know it. High blood pressure may mean that your heart has to work harder to pump blood. Your arteries may be narrow or stiff. The extra work puts you at risk for heart disease, stroke, and other problems.

Blood pressure consists of two numbers, a higher number over a lower, 110/72, for example. It is stated as "110 over 72." The ideal is below 120 for the top number (systolic) and under 80 for the bottom (diastolic). Write down your blood pressure today.

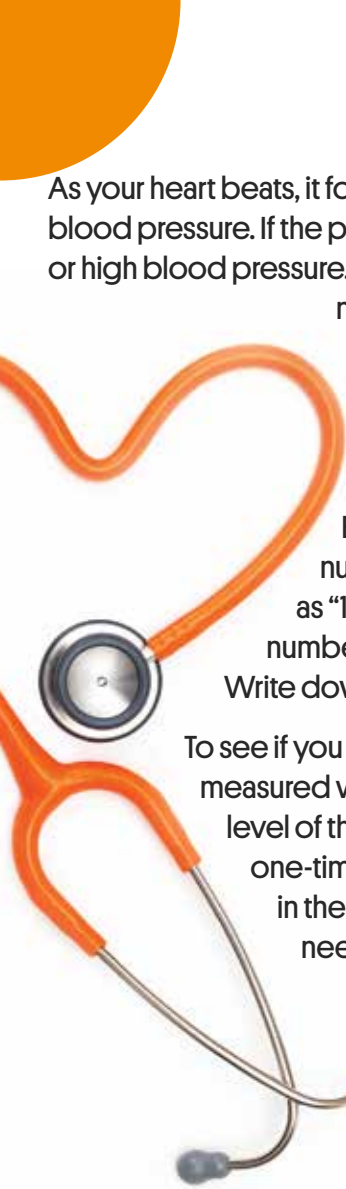
To see if you have HTN, your blood pressure should be measured while you are seated with your arm held at the level of the heart. It should be measured at least twice. A one-time elevated blood pressure reading (especially in the Emergency Department) does not mean that you need treatment. There may be conditions in which the blood pressure is different between your right and left arms. It is important to see your caregiver soon for a recheck.


Most people have essential hypertension which means that there is not a specific cause.

This type of high blood pressure may be lowered by changing lifestyle factors such as:

- Stress
- Lack of exercise
- Drug/tobacco/alcohol use
- Smoking
- Excessive weight
- Eating less salt

Most people do not have symptoms from high blood pressure until it has caused damage to the body. Effective treatment can often prevent, delay or reduce that damage.





**You should pay close  
attention to your blood  
pressure if you have certain  
conditions such as:**

**Heart failure**

**Prior heart attack**

**Diabetes**

**Chronic kidney disease**

**Prior stroke**

**Multiple risk factors  
for heart disease**

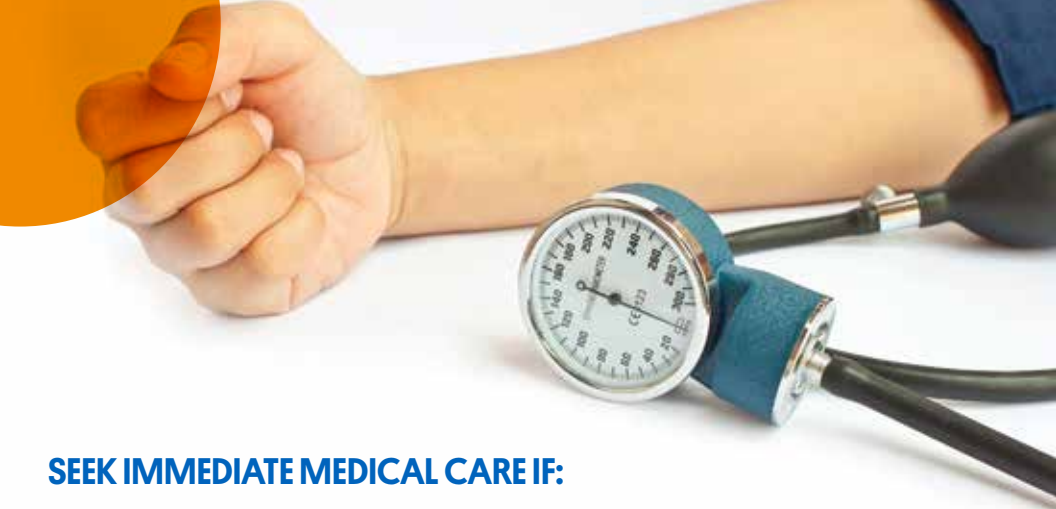
## TREATMENT

When a cause has been identified, treatment for high blood pressure is directed at the cause. There are a large number of medications to treat HTN. These fall into several categories, and your caregiver will help you select the medicines that are best for you. Medications may have side effects. You should review side effects with your caregiver.

If your blood pressure stays high after you have made lifestyle changes or started on medicines,

- Your medication[s] may need to be changed.
- Other problems may need to be addressed.
- Be certain you understand your prescriptions, and know how and when to take your medicine.
- Be sure to follow up with your caregiver within the time frame advised (usually within two weeks) to have your blood pressure rechecked and to review your medications.
- If you are taking more than one medicine to lower your blood pressure, make sure you know how and at what times they should be taken. Taking two medicines at the same time can result in blood pressure that is too low.
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## SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You develop a severe, blurred or changing vision, or confusion.
- You have unusual weakness or numbness, a faint feeling.
- You have severe chest abdominal pain, vomiting, or breathing problems.

Hypertension is another name for high blood pressure. High blood pressure may mean that your heart needs to work harder to pump blood. Blood pressure consists of two numbers, which includes a higher number over a lower number [example: 110/72].

## Home Care

- Make lifestyle changes as told by your doctor. This may include weight loss and exercise.
- Take your blood pressure medicine every day.
- Limit how much salt you use.
- Stop smoking if you smoke.
- Do not use drugs.
- Talk to your doctor if you are using decongestants or birth control pills. These medicines might make blood pressure higher.
- Females should not drink more than 1 alcoholic drink per day. Males should not drink more than 2 alcoholic drinks per day.
- See your doctor as told.



### GET HELP RIGHT AWAY IF:

- You have a blood pressure reading with a top number of 180 or higher.
- You get a very bad headache.
- You get blurred or changing vision.
- You feel confused.
- You feel weak, numb, or faint.
- You get chest or belly (abdominal pain).
- You throw up (vomit).
- You cannot breathe very well.



### MAKE SURE YOU:

- Understand these instructions.
- Will watch your condition.
- Will get help right away if you are doing well or get worse.


### How to Take Your Blood Pressure

These instructions are only for electronic home blood pressure machines. You will need:

- An automatic or semi-automatic blood pressure machine.
- Fresh batteries for the blood pressure machine.

### HOW DO I USE THESE TOOLS TO CHECK MY BLOOD PRESSURE?

- There are 2 numbers that make up your blood pressure.  
For example: 120/80.
- The first number (120 in our example) is called the “systolic pressure.” It is measure of the pressure in your blood vessels when your heart is pumping blood.
- The second number (80 in our example) is called the “diastolic



pressure". It is measure of the pressure in your blood vessels when your heart is resting between beats.

• Before you buy a home blood pressure machine, check the size of your arm so you can buy the right size cuff. Here is how to check the size of your arm:

- Use a tape measure that shows both inches and centimeters.
- Wrap the tape measure around the middle upper part of your arm. You may want someone to help you measure right.
- Write down your arm measurement in both inches and centimeters.
- To measure your blood pressure right, it is important to have the right size cuff.
- If your arm is up to 13 inches (33 to 34 centimeters), get an adult cuff size.
- If your arm is 13 to 17 inches (35 to 44 centimeters), get a large adult cuff size.
- If your arm is 17 to 20 inches (45 to 52 centimeters), get an adult thigh cuff.
- Try to rest or relax for at least 30 minutes before you check your blood pressure.
- Do not smoke.
- Do not have any drinks with caffeine, such as:
  - Pop.
  - Coffee.
  - Tea.
- Check your blood pressure in a quiet room.
- Sit down and stretch out your arm on a table. Keep your arm at about the level of your heart. Let your arm relax.





## GETTING BLOOD PRESSURE READINGS

- Make sure you remove any tight-fitting clothing from your arm. Wrap the cuff around your upper arm. Wrap it just above the bend, and above where you felt the pulse. You should be able to slip a finger between the cuff and your arm. If you cannot slip a finger in the cuff, it is too tight and should be removed and rewrapped.
- Some units requires you to manually pump up the arm cuff.
- Automatic units inflate the cuff when you press a button.
- Cuff deflation is automatic in both models.
- After the cuff is inflated, the unit measures your blood pressure and pulse. The readings are displayed on a monitor. Hold still and breathe normally while the cuff is inflated.
- Getting a reading takes less than a minute.
- Some models store readings in a memory. Some provide a printout of readings.
- Get readings at different times of the day. You should wait at least 5 minutes between readings.

Take readings with you to your next doctor's visit.



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- Heart failure
- Prior heart attack
- Chronic kidney disease
- Prior stroke
- Multiple risk factors for heart disease

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Most people have essential hypertension which means that there is not specific cause. Make lifestyle changes as told by your health care provider. These may include:

- Weight loss and exercise
- Limit how much salt you use
- Stop smoking if you smoke
- Females should not drink more than 1 alcoholic drink per day. Males should not drink more than 2 alcoholic drinks per day
- Discuss with your health care provider appropriate ways to handle stress

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## DASH Diet

The DASH diet stands for “Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension.” It is a healthy eating plan that has been shown to reduce high blood pressure [hypertension] in as little as 14 days, while also possibly providing other significant health benefits. These other health benefits include reducing the risk of breast cancer after menopause and reducing the risk of type 2 diabetes, heart disease, colon cancer, and stroke. Health benefits also include weight loss and slowing kidney failure in patients with chronic kidney disease.

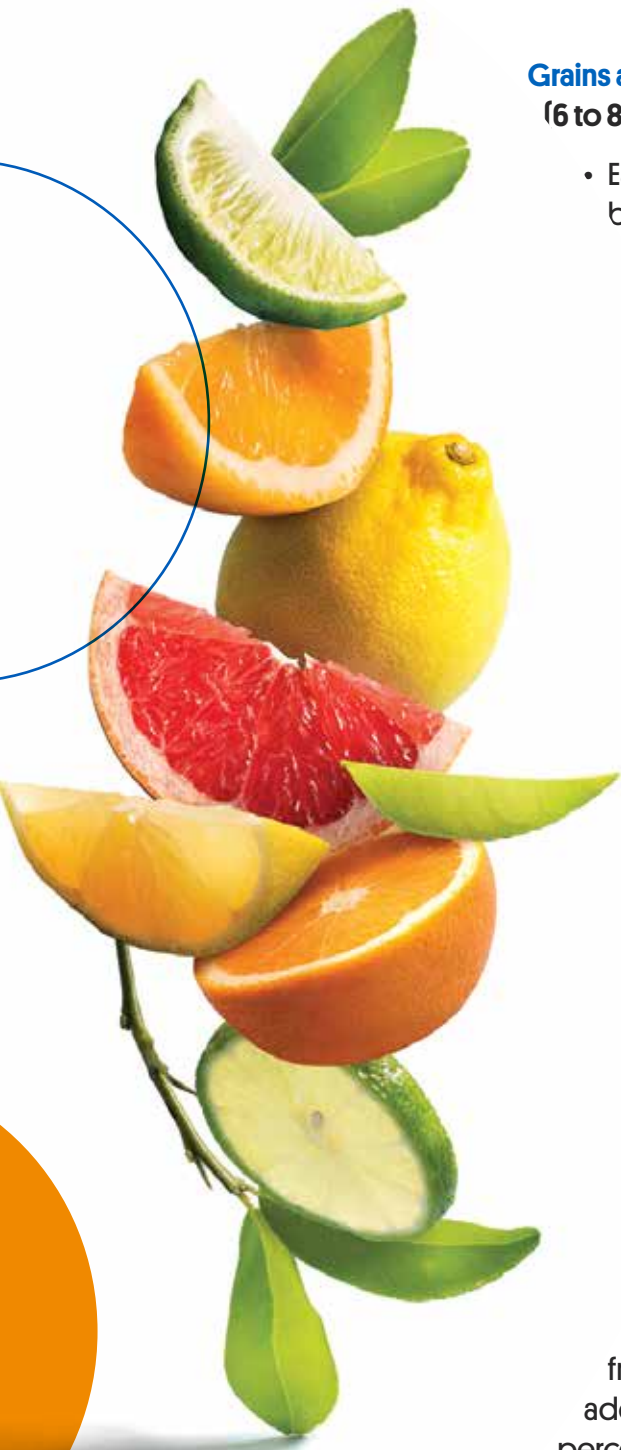
### DIET GUIDELINES

- Limit salt (sodium). Your diet should contain less than 1500 mg of sodium daily.
- Limit refined or processed carbohydrates. Your diet should include mostly whole grains. Desserts and added sugars should be used sparingly.
- Include small amounts of heart-healthy fats. These types of fats include nuts, oils, and tub margarine. Limit saturated and trans fats. These fats have been shown to be harmful in the body.

### CHOOSING FOODS

The following food groups are based on a 2000 calorie diet. See your Registered Dietitian for individual calorie needs.





## **Grains and Grain Products** (6 to 8 servings daily)

- Eat More Often: Whole-wheat bread, brown rice, whole-grain or wheat pasta, quinoa, popcorn without added fat or salt [air popped].
- Eat Less Often: White bread, white pasta, white rice, cornbread.

## **Vegetables** (4 to 5 servings daily)

- Eat More Often: Fresh, frozen, and canned vegetables. Vegetables may be raw, steamed, roasted, or grilled with a minimal amount of fat.
- Eat Less Often/Avoid: Creamed or fried vegetables. Vegetables in a cheese sauce.

## **Fruit** (4 to 5 servings daily)

- Eat More Often: All fresh, canned [in natural juice], or frozen fruits. Dried fruits without added sugar. One hundred percent fruit juice [ $\frac{1}{2}$  cup [237 ml] daily].

- Eat Less Often: Dried fruits with added sugar. Canned fruit in light or heavy syrup.

### **Lean Meats, Fish, and Poultry**

**(2 servings or less daily. One serving is 3 to 4 oz [85-114 g]).**

- Eat More Often: Ninety percent or leaner ground beef, tenderloin, sirloin. Round cuts of beef, chicken breast, turkey breast. All fish. grill, bake, or broil your meat. Nothing should be fried.
- Eat Less Often/Avoid: Fatty cuts of meat, turkey, or chicken leg, thigh, or wing. Fried cuts of meat or fish.

### **Dairy (2 to 3 servings)**

- Eat More Often: Low-fat or fat-free milk, low-fat plain or light yogurt, reduced-fat or part-skim cheese.
- Eat Less Often/Avoid: Milk [whole, 2%]. Whole milk yogurt. Full-fat cheeses.

### **Nuts, Seeds, and Legumes (4 to 5 servings per week)**

- Eat More Often: All without added salt.
- Eat Less Often/Avoid: Salted nuts and seeds, canned beans with added salt.

### **Fats and Sweets (limited)**

- Eat More Often: Vegetable oils, tub margarine without trans fats, sugar-free gelatin. Mayonnaise and salad dressings.
- Eat Less Often/Avoid: Coconut oils, palm oils, butter, stick margarine, cream, half and half, cookies, candy, pie.









The content of this brochure is for informational purposes only.  
It is not intended to replace evaluation by a physician.

If you have questions or medical concerns, please contact  
your primary care provider.