



American Heart Association®

Healthy for Good™

Life's Essential



HOW TO MANAGE BLOOD PRESSURE

High blood pressure (hypertension) can harm heart and brain health and usually has no symptoms. It damages blood vessels and can lead to serious health problems. It can cause other health problems, like: heart attack, stroke, dementia, heart failure, kidney disease/failure, and vision loss. It can even lead to erectile dysfunction in men and reduced sexual arousal in women.

✓ UNDERSTAND READINGS

Blood pressure is typically recorded as two numbers, written as a ratio like this:



117
76

Read as "117 over 76" millimeters of mercury.

SYSTOLIC • The top number, the higher of the two numbers, measures the pressure in the arteries when the heart beats (when the heart muscle contracts).

DIASTOLIC • The bottom number, the lower of the two numbers, measures the pressure in the arteries when the heart is resting between heart beats.

BLOOD PRESSURE CATEGORY	SYSTOLIC mm Hg (top/upper number)		DIASTOLIC mm Hg (bottom/lower number)
NORMAL	LESS THAN 120	and	LESS THAN 80
ELEVATED	120–129	and	LESS THAN 80
STAGE 1 HYPERTENSION (High Blood Pressure)	130–139	or	80–89
STAGE 2 HYPERTENSION (High Blood Pressure)	140 OR HIGHER	or	90 OR HIGHER
SEVERE HYPERTENSION (If you don't have symptoms*, call your health care professional.)	HIGHER THAN 180	and/or	HIGHER THAN 120
HYPERTENSIVE EMERGENCY (If you have any of these symptoms*, call 911.)	HIGHER THAN 180	and/or	HIGHER THAN 120

*symptoms: chest pain, shortness of breath, back pain, numbness, weakness, change in vision or difficulty speaking

✓ TRACK LEVELS



You can track your blood pressure at home with a validated blood pressure device. Some pharmacies, health clinics and fire stations have free monitoring stations. A high blood pressure diagnosis must be confirmed by a health care professional.

Learn more at heart.org/lifes8



TIPS FOR SUCCESS



EAT SMART

Lower your sodium, saturated and trans fats and added sugars. Eat a DASH-like pattern; eat meals with lots of vegetables, fruits, nuts, seeds, legumes, whole grains, healthy nontropical oils, lean protein such as fish, seafood, low-fat dairy and, if desired, lean poultry and meats. Limit sugary foods and drinks, red meats, processed meats, salty snacks, and foods that are highly processed.



MOVE MORE

Exercise can help lower high blood pressure levels. It can also improve your mood and clear your mind.



MANAGE WEIGHT

If you have overweight or obesity, even a weight loss of at least 5%, can lower or prevent high blood pressure.



NO NICOTINE

Every time you smoke, vape or use tobacco or nicotine pouches, the nicotine can cause a temporary increase in blood pressure.



SLEEP WELL

Short sleep (less than 7 hours) and poor-quality sleep are associated with high blood pressure.



ALCOHOL

Drink less or no alcohol to lower or prevent high blood pressure.