

MANAGING BLOOD PRESSURE THROUGH DIET AND EXERCISE

In partnership with POTENTRx

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What is Blood Pressure?

Blood pressure refers to the pressure of blood against your artery walls. The top number, referred to as systolic blood pressure, indicates the pressure against the walls during heart beats; the bottom number, referred to as the diastolic value, measures the pressure against the walls in between heart beats. Blood pressure is measured in millimeters of mercury, or “mm Hg.”

Know Your Numbers!

Q: What is a normal, healthy blood pressure reading?

A: A normal blood pressure reading shows a systolic (top number) less than 120 mm Hg, and the diastolic (bottom number) less than 80 mm Hg.

Q: How often should I check my blood pressure?

A: The American Heart Association recommends a blood pressure screening every 2 years with your physician, so long as your blood pressure is normal. If your blood pressure reading is elevated, meaning either or both the systolic and diastolic are above 120/80 mm Hg, your doctor may want more

Q: Why is elevated blood pressure bad?

A: Elevated blood pressure places extra stress on the walls of your arteries, which then damages the fragile walls. These walls harden, also known as atherosclerosis and causing the heart to work harder with every beat.

Q: My blood pressure is slightly elevated for the first time; should I be worried?

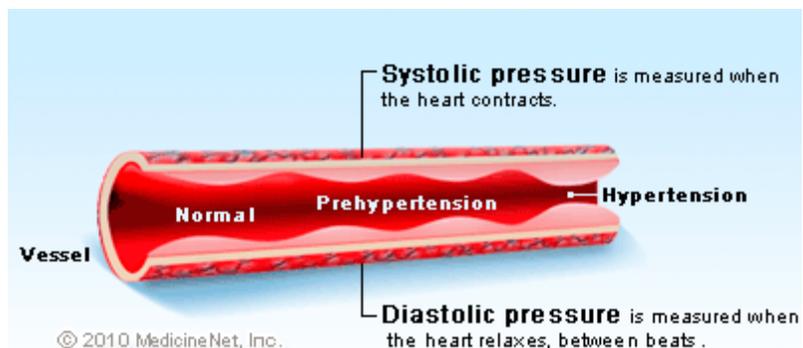
A: Systolic blood pressure between 120 and 139 mm Hg, and a diastolic blood pressure between 80 and 90 mm Hg is considered *pre-hypertensive*; you should speak with your physician about options for reducing your blood pressure through lifestyle modifications or medication.

Q: Is there anything I can do to control my hypertension aside from taking medication?

A: Yes! There are many modifiable risk factors that contribute to high blood pressure. Please refer to the reverse side for lifestyle changes that can help to relieve high blood pressure.

Approximately 1 in every 3 American adults are hypertensive, and of those 33%, only half have their condition under control.

CDC, 2015





Factors of Hypertension

There is no one, definite cause of hypertension, but the following are known to increase risk for hypertension:

Modifiable Risk Factors

Obesity or being overweight, smoking, lack of physical activity, stress, diet high in sodium, and excess alcohol consumption (> 1-2 drinks per day).

Non-Modifiable Risk Factors

Family history of hypertension, age, and ethnicity.

What Can Exercise Do For Blood Pressure?

Regular exercise can lower blood pressure 4 to 9 mm Hg, which is equivalent to the effect of some medications. For many, decreasing blood pressure by this amount may prevent the need to start medications to control hypertension. 150 minutes per week of moderate aerobic exercise is recommended. This can be broken up to thirty minute sessions, 5x week or further broken down into three 10 minutes sessions of exercise, 5x week. Recommended exercise includes walking, jogging, biking, swimming, or household chores that increase your heart rate for extended periods of time. It can take up to 1 to 3 months of regular exercise before noticeable changes are made in blood pressure.

What Can Lifestyle Changes Do For Blood Pressure?

There are many proven and recommended lifestyle changes to lower blood pressure—the primary being reduced body weight. For every 20lbs lost, BP can decrease anywhere from 5-20mm Hg. Diets such as the DASH (dietary approaches to stop hypertension) diet, are proven to aid in weight loss and HTN. One can also decrease sodium and increase potassium intake in the diet. Avoid salty snacks such as chips and cured meats, and replace them with bananas or kale, both high in potassium. Reducing alcohol consumption can lower BP by 2 to 4 mm Hg; limit yourself to no more than 1-2 drinks per day. Finally, consider reducing stress through a regular practice of yoga or meditation; mindfulness and attention to breath can both help to reduce blood pressure.

