

Blood Pressure

More than 74.5 million people in the United States have high blood pressure. This means that 1 in 3 U.S. adults have high blood pressure.

The good news is that you can prevent and control high blood pressure. Losing weight, if necessary, trying more heart healthy foods and being physically active are small, but important steps you can take that can help you prevent or control high blood pressure.

What Is Normal Blood Pressure?

Blood pressure is the force of blood against your artery walls as it moves through your body. A blood pressure reading below 120/80 is considered normal. Generally, lower is better. However, a very low blood pressure can sometimes be a cause for concern and should be checked out by your health care provider.

Pressure	Normal	At Risk (pre-hypertension)	Stage 1 hypertension	Stage 2 hypertension
Systolic	Less than 120	120-139	140-159	More than 160
	&	or	or	or
Dyastolic	Less than 80	80-89	90-99	More than 100

If your blood pressure is in the pre-hypertension range, it is more likely that you will end up with high blood pressure unless you act to prevent it.

What Is High Blood Pressure?

If blood pressure stays high for a long period of time, it can lead to heart disease, stroke, and other health problems. A blood pressure of 140/90 or higher is considered high blood pressure - another name for hypertension.

Both numbers are important. If one or both numbers remain high over a period of time, you have high blood pressure. If you are being treated for high blood pressure, you still have high blood pressure even if you have repeated readings in the normal range. Only one of the numbers—the top or the bottom—needs to be high for you to have pre-hypertension or high blood pressure.

Who Gets High Blood Pressure?

High blood pressure affects people of all ages, sex, race, and ethnicity. This is not a part of healthy aging! There are usually no symptoms for high blood pressure so it is important to visit with your health care provider regularly.

How Can I Prevent High Blood Pressure?

There are many things you can do to help keep your blood pressure low. Everyone can lower his or her chances of developing high blood pressure, regardless of age! Here's how:

- Check your blood pressure regularly
- Be physically active
- Eat a healthy diet high in fruits, vegetables, and low-fat dairy products
- Choose and prepare foods with less salt and sodium
- Keep a healthy weight and lose weight if you are overweight
- If you drink alcoholic beverages, do so in moderation
- If you use tobacco stopping is the best thing you can do for your heart

(more on back)

Be Active // Be Healthy

The DASH Eating Plan Can Help Prevent and Lower High Blood Pressure

People with high blood pressure can lower their blood pressure within a month by following the DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) eating plan that emphasizes:

Food Group	2,000 calorie diet
Grains	6-8 servings per day
Vegetables	4-5 servings per day
Fruits	4-5 servings per day
Low-Fat Milk Products	2-3 servings per day
Lean Meat, Poultry, & Fish	6 or less servings per day
Fats & Oils	2-3 servings per day
Nuts, Seeds, & Legumes	4-5 servings per week
Sweets & Added Sugars	5 or less servings per week

The DASH Study showed that the eating plan was beneficial to both people with high blood pressure and those wishing to prevent high blood pressure.

For more information on the DASH eating plan, visit the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute web-site at www.nhlbi.nih.gov and SEARCH for "DASH".

Resources

American Heart Association

www.heart.org

National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute

www.nhlbi.nih.gov

Nebraska Cardiovascular Health Program

www.dhhs.ne.gov/cvh

For More Information:

Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services

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www.dhhs.ne.gov/womenshealth and www.dhhs.ne.gov/menshealth