



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 leads to serious health problems. It can increase your risk of a heart attack, cardiac arrest and stroke. It can also increase the risk of dementia, especially in middle age. It can even lead to erectile dysfunction in men and may cause a lower sex drive in women.



UNDERSTAND READINGS

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



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 (UPPER #)	DIASTOLIC MM HG (LOWER #)	
Normal	Lower than 120	and	Lower than 80
Elevated Blood Pressure	120 –129	and	80
High Blood Pressure (Hypertension) Stage 1	130 –139	or	80 –89
High Blood Pressure (Hypertension) Stage 2	140 or higher	or	90 or higher
Hypertensive Crisis (Consult your doctor immediately)	Higher than 180	and/ or	Higher than 120



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. Any very low blood pressure reading should also be checked.

Learn more at heart.org/lifes8

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TIPS FOR SUCCESS



EAT SMART

Lower your sodium, saturated and trans fats and sugar. Eat meals with lots of vegetables, fruits, whole grains, beans, nuts, and lean proteins like fish and seafood. 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're overweight, even a slight weight loss can reduce 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.