

High Blood Pressure (Hypertension)

What Is High Blood Pressure?

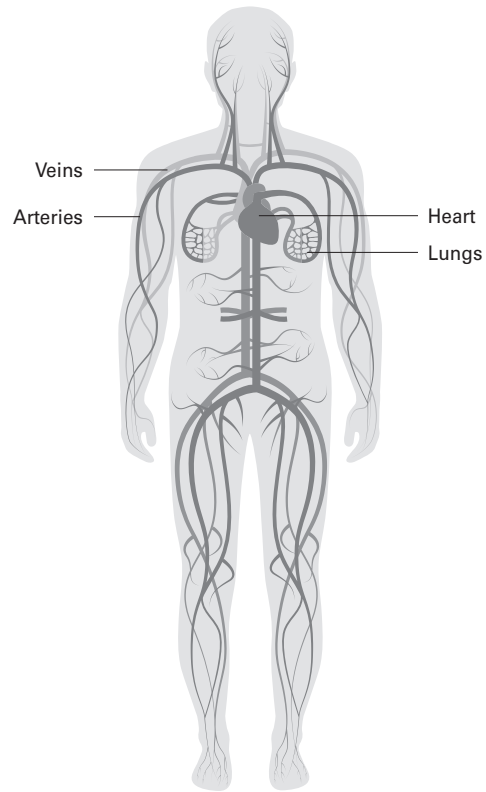
High blood pressure, also called *hypertension*, means the pressure in your blood vessel system is higher than normal. High blood pressure increases your risk of heart attack and stroke, which are common causes of early death in the United States.

How Common Is High Blood Pressure?

About one in three U.S. adults has high blood pressure.¹ People with co-occurring disorders have higher rates of this condition. High blood pressure can be identified and treated. Keeping your blood pressure under control can prevent heart disease and death.

How Do the Heart and Blood Vessels Work?

The heart is a pump. Heart muscles contract and relax to push blood through your arteries and veins, delivering oxygen and nutrients to every part of your body. Cells and tissues cannot survive if they don't receive oxygen from the blood. Blood pressure is the force of the blood against the walls of the arteries as the blood flows through the body. Blood pressure is expressed as two numbers, for example, 140/90, which is spoken as "140 over 90." The higher first number is the blood pressure inside the arteries when the heart is contracting, and the lower second number is the blood pressure inside the arteries when the heart is relaxing. Your blood pressure normally rises and falls throughout the day. If it stays high for long periods of time, it can cause problems. If the blood vessel system becomes stiff, blood pressure goes up and the heart has to work harder to pump the blood through the



system. High blood pressure can lead to serious heart disease, stroke, or kidney disease, even when a person has no symptoms. Experts recommend that people get treatment to keep their blood pressure lower than 140/90.

What Causes High Blood Pressure?

High blood pressure has numerous causes, including these:

- inheriting a high chance of high blood pressure from your parents
- using cigarettes, alcohol, cocaine, or other drugs
- being overweight, especially if you have extra weight around the belly
- eating a diet high in salt
- doing little physical activity
- experiencing high stress

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "High Blood Pressure Facts," last updated February 19, 2015, www.cdc.gov/bloodpressure/facts.htm.

- taking some medications for mental health disorders (such as venlafaxine, bupropion, or stimulants) that may raise blood pressure (although most medications used to treat mental health disorders have a tendency to lower blood pressure)

What Can I Do about High Blood Pressure?

You can do many things to prevent or treat high blood pressure:

- Have your blood pressure and pulse checked regularly.
- See your primary care doctor, who will monitor your blood pressure and possibly prescribe blood pressure medication.
- Take your blood pressure medication every day.
- Cut down or stop drinking alcohol, because alcohol causes high blood pressure.
- Don't use stimulant drugs, such as cocaine and methamphetamine, because they also cause high blood pressure and other problems with your heart and blood vessel system.
- Maintain a healthy weight. If you are overweight, lose weight.
- Exercise vigorously for 25 minutes at least three times a week, for example, by walking or biking briskly, taking exercise classes, or playing basketball.
- Learn and practice relaxation strategies, such as breathing, meditation, and yoga.
- Do relaxing hobbies, such as painting, gardening, or fishing.

- Quit smoking cigarettes, because smoke causes heart and blood vessel disease.
- Get screened for other heart disease risk factors, including high sugar and fat in your bloodstream.

Where Can I Learn More?

American Heart Association, www.heart.org

The AHA site includes information on high blood pressure, stress management, and quitting smoking.

National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, www.nhlbi.nih.gov

The NHLBI's health topics include blood pressure information in English and Spanish.

Medline Plus, www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus

Medline Plus offers information on blood pressure medications, plus a "Start Here" resources list and a section on the latest medical news articles.

WebMD, www.webmd.com

This site's hypertension section includes explanations of how blood pressure medications work.

Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) Diet, www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/dash-eating-plan

The Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension, or DASH, diet offers an eating plan specifically tailored for lowering blood pressure.

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1. My blood pressure reading is ____ / ____.

2. I have high blood pressure.

____ I will make an appointment with my physician to talk about my high blood pressure and possible medications.

____ I will make an appointment with my physician to adjust my blood pressure medicine.

____ I will take my blood pressure medicine regularly. I should take:

____ dose ____ times a day.
(amount) (number)

____ I will check my blood pressure on a daily basis with a blood pressure monitor.

3. Below is a list of my medicines and why I take each one. If have questions about my medicines, I will ask my doctor.

4. I will also take the following steps:

a. I will not use alcohol or other drugs.

My plan: _____

b. I will lose weight or eat more healthy foods.

My plan: _____

c. I will exercise more.

My plan: _____

d. I will reduce the stress in my life.

My plan: _____

Client signature

Date