



## Managing Your Blood Pressure

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*Editor's note: Heart health, including hypertension management, is an important health concern for patients. Cindy Nylund, Nurse Practitioner, has a general practice with speciality training in this area. The information in this article is drawn from the following sources: Canadian Heart and Stroke Foundation (2018), Hypertension Canada (2018) and the American Heart Association (2017).*

### What is blood pressure?

Blood pressure is a measure of the force exerted against the walls of your blood vessels known as your arteries and it is measured in millimeters of mercury (mmHg). The systolic (top) number measures the force when your heart contracts and pushes out the blood. The diastolic (bottom) number is a measure of when your heart relaxes between beats.

### What should your blood pressure be?

Most adults **should be < 140/90** at the doctor's office or **< 135/85 mmHg** at home

Adults > 80 years of age **< 150/90**

People with Diabetes **< 130/80**

High blood pressure (hypertension) may damage your arteries and increase your risk of heart attack, stroke, heart failure, and kidney disease. It has also been associated with erectile dysfunction and dementia. Early diagnosis and treatment of high blood pressure helps to prevent these problems. Unfortunately, people with high blood pressure often have no warning signs or symptoms and that is why it's called the "silent killer".

### Blood Pressure Treatment

#### Lifestyle Modifications

Ideally, all adults should engage in 30-60 minutes of moderate intensity exercise 4-7 days a week. Exercise will help to lower blood pressure, decrease blood sugar, reduce stress, and improve energy levels, mood, and sleep. Try walking, biking, swimming or any other physical activity that you enjoy. Also, it's important to remain active throughout the rest of the day. Try parking further away from the door when you go shopping, stand up

and walk when you talk on the phone or take the stairs instead of the elevator.

#### Healthy Eating

A healthy diet can decrease your blood pressure, improve cholesterol levels, reduce weight, and control blood sugar. A healthy diet consists of 7-10 servings of vegetables and fruit every day. Choose whole grains, low fat dairy products and protein choices such as lean meat, fish or chicken. Prepare meals at home and limit fast foods. Eat less salt (< 2000 mg per day) and remember that highly processed foods contain a lot of salt. Limit canned foods and pre-packaged meals or those high in salt, sugar, saturated fat, or trans fats. Reduce your intake of shortening, palm or coconut oil and lard.

Limit your alcohol intake to one or two standard drinks per day. If you carry extra weight, a loss of 5 or 10% of your body weight will help to lower your blood pressure. If you smoke, it's important to quit as it increases your risks of heart problems and other diseases.

#### Medications for High Blood Pressure

Many medications that lower blood pressure also help to prevent heart attacks and strokes. Medications that are used to lower blood pressure include: water pills (diuretics), beta blockers, angiotensin converting enzymes (ACE inhibitors), angiotensin receptor blockers (ARB's) and calcium channel blockers. Most people need 2 or more medications to control their blood pressure. It's important to take your medications every day as prescribed to get the most benefit and reduce your risks. You should never stop your medications before speaking to your provider and you should continue with lifestyle modifications to effectively manage your blood pressure.

#### Helpful Links

<https://myhealthcheckup.com>

[https://www.ccs.ca/images/Guidelines/Tools\\_and\\_Calculators/En/FRS\\_eng\\_2017\\_fnl1.pdf](https://www.ccs.ca/images/Guidelines/Tools_and_Calculators/En/FRS_eng_2017_fnl1.pdf) 

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