

Remember what the blood pressure number means...

When your doctor or nurse tells you your blood pressure, he or she will say 2 numbers:



The top number (systolic) is the blood pressure when your heart is pumping



The bottom number (diastolic) is the blood pressure when your heart is resting.



Your blood pressure is high if the top number (systolic) is higher than 130 and the bottom number (diastolic) is higher than 80. For example, your doctor or nurse will say that your blood pressure is “130 over 80”.

Blood pressure is normal if the top number is below 120 and the bottom number is below 80.


Many people have high blood pressure and do not know it; this is the reason it is often called “the silent killer”.

Reference:

Whelton PK et al. (2017). ACC/AHA/AAPA/ABC/ACPM/AGS/APhA/ASH/ASPC/NMA/PCNA Guideline for the Prevention, Detection, Evaluation, and Management of High Blood Pressure in Adults. *Journal of the American College of Cardiology*, doi: 10.1016/j.jacc.2017.11.006.

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NOTE: This material is for informational purposes only. It does not replace information you receive from your health care provider. Consult your health care provider for advice and complete information about your health.



High Blood Pressure: What to do When it Happens

What problems could happen if your blood pressure stays high?

- Heart attack, heart failure, or other heart problems
- Stroke
- Kidney disease or failure
- Loss of eyesight
- Memory problems
- Fluid in the lungs
- Sexual parts not working right
- Artery disease in your arms or legs



How can you know if your blood pressure is high?

There are no warning signs of high blood pressure until damage to your heart and blood vessel walls has started.

What things can cause your blood pressure to go high

Things you can control

- Low activity or movement
- Weight is higher than normal
- Diet is not healthy such as eating too much salt, fat, or sugar
- Drinking too much alcohol
- Tobacco use
- Worry or stress

Things you cannot control

- Family history (others in your family with high blood pressure)
- Race (your family culture)
- Age (the older you get, the greater the danger)
- Gender (males are at greater danger)

When your blood pressure reading is high...

- Keep calm and relax
- Wait five minutes and check again
- Record all the readings so the doctor will be able to help you

When your blood pressure remains high, and your doctor or nurse has prescribed blood pressure medicine...



- Make sure you have taken the blood pressure medicine that your doctor has prescribed. Taking your blood pressure medicine can keep you from having a heart attack or stroke, and it can save your life!
- If you have taken your blood pressure medicine, report to your doctor with your blood pressure journal.



Call 911, or get to nearest hospital if you have...

- Signs of heart attack
- Signs of stroke
- Blood pressure that is 20 points higher than your normal top or bottom number
- Blood pressure that is higher than 180 over 120 (high blood pressure emergency)
- Very bad headache
- Confusion
- Sudden change in hearing or eyesight
- Nosebleed
- You are not feeling better in 2 or 3 days, or you are feeling worse

