



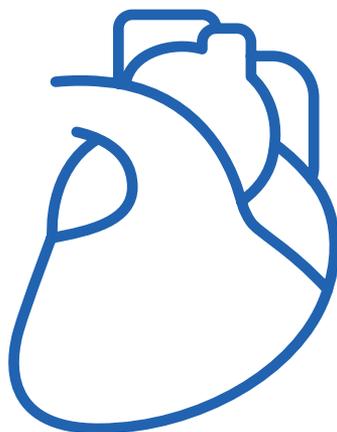
# Your Guide to Hypertension

Healthy Start for a Better Heart —  
Talking All Things Blood Pressure

Healthy

# What is hypertension?

Hypertension is also known as high blood pressure. Blood pressure is the force of blood against your artery walls as it moves through the body. Blood pressure normally rises and falls throughout the day, but it can cause health problems if it stays high for a long time. If your blood moves through your vessels with too much force, then you have high blood pressure.



## Know Your Numbers

The top number is called the **Systolic Blood Pressure**. It is a measure of blood pressure when the heart beats. The bottom number is called the **Diastolic Blood Pressure** and it is the measure of the pressure when the heart rests. Discuss your blood pressure goal with your doctor. Your blood pressure target is unique to you, based on your age, health, and other factors.

The below chart is a guideline of the different types of Blood Pressure goals.

<b>Blood Pressure Category</b>	<b>Systolic mm Hg (top #)</b>		<b>Diastolic mm Hg (bottom #)</b>
Normal	Less than 120	and	Less than 80
Elevated	120-129	and	Less than 80
Hypertension Stage 1	130-139	or	80-89
Hypertension Stage 2	140 or higher	or	90 or higher
Hypertensive Crisis (consult your doctor)	Higher than 180	and/or	Higher than 120

# What are the risk factors of hypertension?

## Age

- The risk of high blood pressure increases as you age.
- Until about age 64, high blood pressure is more common in men.
- Women are more likely to develop high blood pressure after age 65.

## Race

- High blood pressure is particularly common among people of African heritage, often developing at an earlier age than it does in whites.

## Family History

- High blood pressure tends to run in families.



## Excessive Weight or Obesity

- The more you weigh, the more blood you need to supply oxygen and nutrients to your tissues.

## Lack of Physical Activity

- People who are inactive tend to have higher heart rates. The higher your heart rate, the harder your heart must work.

## Tobacco

- Not only does smoking or chewing tobacco immediately raise your blood pressure temporarily, but the chemicals in tobacco can damage the lining of your artery walls.

## Excessive Salt (sodium)

- Too much salt in your diet can cause your body to retain fluid, which increases blood pressure.

## **Excessive Alcohol**

- Over time, heavy drinking can damage your heart. Having more than one drink a day for women and more than two drinks a day for men may affect your blood pressure.

## **Stress**

- High levels of stress can lead to a temporary increase in blood pressure.

## **Certain Chronic Conditions**

- Certain chronic conditions also may increase your risk of high blood pressure, including kidney disease, diabetes, and sleep apnea.



# What are the symptoms and complications of hypertension?

High blood pressure is known as the “silent killer” because there are usually no symptoms or warning signs to tell you something is wrong. Many people with high blood pressure do not even know they have it. A few people with high blood pressure may have headaches, shortness of breath or nosebleeds, but these signs and symptoms aren’t specific to high blood pressure alone, and/or should be reported to your doctor as soon as possible.

Uncontrolled high blood pressure can lead to complications including:

## **Heart Attack or Stroke**

- High blood pressure can cause damage to your arteries by making them less elastic which decreases the flow of blood and oxygen to your heart and brain.
- This can lead to a heart attack, stroke, or other complications.

## **Aneurysm**

- Increased blood pressure can cause your blood vessels to weaken and bulge, forming an aneurysm. If an aneurysm ruptures, it can be life-threatening.

## **Heart Failure**

- To pump blood against the higher pressure in your vessels, the heart has to work harder, and this can eventually lead to heart failure.

## **Weakened and Narrowed Blood Vessels in Your Kidneys**

- This can prevent these organs from functioning normally.

## **Thickened, Narrowed or Torn Blood Vessels in the Eyes**

- This can result in vision loss.

## **Trouble With Memory or Understanding**

- Uncontrolled high blood pressure may also affect your ability to think, remember and learn.

## **Metabolic Syndrome**

- This syndrome is a group of disorders of your body's metabolism, including excess body fat around the waist, high triglycerides, low high-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol (the "good" cholesterol), high blood pressure and high blood sugar levels.
- These conditions make you more likely to develop diabetes, heart disease and stroke.

## **Dementia**

- Narrowed or blocked arteries can limit blood flow to the brain, leading to a certain type of dementia (vascular dementia).
- Symptoms of dementia include loss of cognitive functioning, thinking, remembering, and reasoning.

# How is hypertension managed and treated?

Hypertension can be managed with dietary changes or medication. Some dietary and lifestyle changes include:



**Eat a well-balanced diet that is low in salt**



**Maintain a healthy weight**



**Limit alcohol**



**Take your medications properly**



**Enjoy regular physical activity**



**Quit smoking**



**Manage stress**



**Work together with your doctor**

- If changing your lifestyle isn't enough to control your blood pressure, your doctor may prescribe medication.
- If you're on medication(s), maintaining a healthy lifestyle will help you control your blood pressure more efficiently.
- It is important to take your medication exactly as prescribed. You may need more than one medicine. Even if you're feeling fine, never cut back or stop taking the prescribed medicine without consulting your doctor.

## Why is it important to take my medication?

By taking your medication(s) and controlling your high blood pressure, you can reduce your risk of heart disease, heart attack, and stroke.

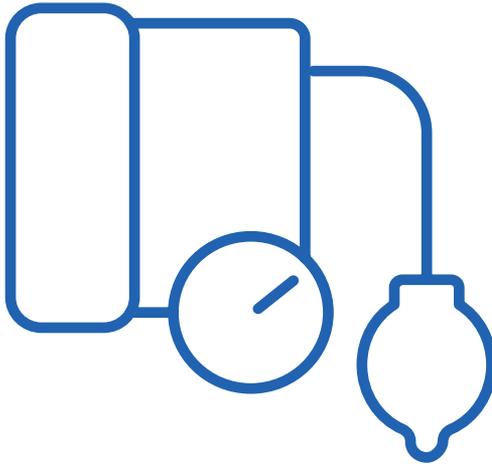
## What are some best practices for getting the most out of my medication?

- Keep an updated list of all your current medications including all prescription and over-the-counter medications.
- Create a daily routine for taking and tracking your medications.
- Always ask for more information if you have any questions or concerns about your medications.



# How do I measure my blood pressure?

- Wear cuff over sleeveless arm. Do not place blood pressure cuff over clothes.
- Be still, sit upright and relaxed.
- Do not cross your legs. Keep feet flat on the floor. Support your arm on a flat surface at about heart level.
- Place the bottom of the cuff directly above the bend of the elbow.
- Take multiple readings and record the results. Take two or three readings one minute apart each time you measure to get the most accurate blood pressure reading.





# What questions should I ask my doctor/pharmacist?

- How do I know if I need medicine for high blood pressure?
- What is the name of my medicine?
- How does this medicine work in my body?
- How and when should I use this medicine?
- How long will I need this medicine for?
- What are the possible side effects of taking this medicine?
- What other prescription and over-the-counter medications should I avoid while taking my blood pressure medicines?
- What if I forget to take my medicine or take a dose incorrectly?
- How often should I measure my blood pressure?
- What should I do if I am pregnant, planning to get pregnant, or breastfeeding?
- How can I learn more about my condition?

# Where can I find more information?

For information about taking your medicine the right way, attending one of our live virtual or on-demand classes and/or ordering your very own free pillbox, please visit the following websites:

ConnectiCare: [www.connecticare.com/resources/pharmacy/med-adherence](http://www.connecticare.com/resources/pharmacy/med-adherence)

EmblemHealth: [www.emblemhealth.com/resources/pharmacy/med-adherence](http://www.emblemhealth.com/resources/pharmacy/med-adherence)

## References

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*Note: The information provided in this brochure does not replace the need for a medical care professional. Please speak to your doctor if you have any questions.*



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