



Keeping Your Heart Healthy

Keeping your heart healthy is something you can work at every day in a variety of ways. A healthy diet and lifestyle can help you manage your blood pressure and cholesterol, lowering the risks of heart disease.



HEART HEALTHY DIET – SIX STRATEGIES TO PREVENT HEART DISEASE

Knowing which foods to eat more of and which foods to limit, is a huge first step in keeping your heart healthy.

1. Eat More Veggies and Fruits

Vegetables and fruits are good sources of vitamins and minerals. They are also low in calories and high in dietary fiber. Most importantly, vegetables and fruit contain substances that may help prevent cardiovascular disease. However, you still need to be mindful about which veggies and fruit you eat.

Vegetables and Fruits to Choose	Fruits and Vegetables to Limit
- Fresh or frozen vegetables and fruits - Low-sodium canned vegetables - Canned fruit packed in juice or water	- Vegetables with creamy sauces - Fried or breaded vegetables - Canned fruit packed in heavy syrup - Frozen fruit with sugar added

2. Choose Whole Grains

Whole grains are vital to every heart-healthy diet. They are a good source of fiber and contain many nutrients that help regulate blood pressure and heart health. Substituting whole grains for refined grain products can be rather simple.

Grain Products to Choose	Grain Products to Limit or Avoid
- Whole-wheat flour - Whole-grain bread, preferably 100 percent whole-wheat bread or 100 percent whole-grain bread - High-fiber cereal with five grams or more fiber in a serving - Whole grains such as brown rice, barley and buckwheat (kasha) - Whole-grain pasta - Oatmeal (steel-cut or regular)	- White, refined flour - White bread - Muffins - Frozen waffles - Corn bread - Doughnuts - Biscuits - Quick breads - Cakes - Pies - Egg noodles - Buttered popcorn - High-fat snack crackers



3. Limit Unhealthy Fats

Limiting saturated and trans fats in your diet is important in reducing your blood cholesterol and lowering your risk of coronary artery disease.

When you do use fats, choose monounsaturated fats, such as olive oil or canola oil. Polyunsaturated fats, found in certain fish, avocados, nuts and seeds, also are good choices for a heart-healthy diet.

Fats to Choose	Fats to Limit
- Olive oil - Canola oil - Vegetable and nut oils - Margarine, trans fat free - Cholesterol-lowering margarine - Nuts, seeds - Avocados 	- Butter - Lard - Bacon fat - Gravy - Cream sauce - Nondairy creamers - Hydrogenated margarine and shortening - Coconut, palm, cottonseed and palm-kernel oils

4. Choose Low-Fat Protein Sources

Lean meat, poultry, fish, low-fat dairy products and eggs are some of your best sources of protein. Certain types of fish are also rich in omega-3 fatty acids, which can help lower triglycerides.

Legumes — beans, peas and lentils — are also good sources of protein and contain less fat and no cholesterol, making them good substitutes for meat. Substituting plant protein for animal protein will reduce your fat and cholesterol intake as well as increase your fiber intake.

5. Reduce Sodium in Your Food

Reducing the amount of salt you add to food at the table and while cooking is a good first step. However, much of the salt you eat comes from canned or processed foods, such as soups, baked goods and frozen dinners. Eating fresh foods and making your own soups and stews can reduce the amount of salt you eat.



6. Control Portion Size

Just as important as what you eat, is how much you eat. Overloading your plate, going back for seconds and eating until you feel stuffed lead to consuming more calories than you should.

Use a small plate or bowl to help control your portions. A good strategy to use is to eat larger portions of low-calorie, nutrient-rich foods, such as fruits and vegetables, and smaller portions of high-calorie, high-sodium foods, like refined, processed or fast foods.

HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE – WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Blood pressure readings consist of two values. The top value, the systolic, indicates the amount of pressure exerted against the vessel walls while the heart is at work. The bottom value, the diastolic, indicates the amount of pressure exerted against the vessel walls while the heart is at rest, between beats.

Pointers When Checking Your Blood Pressure

Observe your blood pressure reading at each doctor’s visit. Pay attention to any trends.

If necessary, invest in a home blood pressure kit to monitor more frequently.

- Check roughly once a week.
- Check blood pressure at the same time of day and on the same arm, unless directed otherwise.
- Avoid caffeine, excess sodium and sugar intake, nicotine use and rigorous physical activity before checking.
- Relax both mind and body before taking it.
- Keep a written history of your blood pressure readings for your personal doctor.



According to the American Heart Association, nearly one in three U.S. adults has high blood pressure. There are no symptoms of high blood pressure, which is why it’s referred to as the silent killer. Unfortunately, uncontrolled or high blood pressure places one at increased risk for developing multiple serious health conditions.

- Damage to the heart, blood vessels and organs
 - Stroke
- Heart attack
 - Kidney disease

Know Your Numbers

The only way to know if you have high blood pressure (HBP, or hypertension) is to have your blood pressure tested. Understanding your results is key to controlling high blood pressure. Below are the five blood pressure ranges as recognized by the American Heart Association.

- **Normal** – Blood pressure numbers of less than 120/80 mm Hg are considered within the normal range.
- **Elevated** – Blood pressure readings consistently range from 120-129 systolic and less than 80 mm Hg diastolic. People with elevated blood pressure are likely to develop high blood pressure unless steps are taken to control the condition.
- **Hypertension Stage 1** – Blood pressure consistently ranges from 130-139 systolic or 80-89 mm Hg diastolic. At this stage of high blood pressure, doctors are likely to prescribe lifestyle changes and may consider adding blood pressure medication based on your risk of atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease (ASCVD), such as heart attack or stroke.
- **Hypertension Stage 2** – Blood pressure consistently ranges at 140/90 mm Hg or higher. At this stage, doctors are likely to prescribe a combination of blood pressure medications and lifestyle changes.
- **Hypertensive Crisis** – This stage of high blood pressure requires medical attention. If your blood pressure readings suddenly exceed 180/120 mm Hg, wait five minutes and then test your blood pressure again. If your readings are still unusually high, contact your doctor immediately.

BP Category	Systolic mm Hg (upper number)		Diastolic mm Hg (lower number)
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	Higher than 180	and/or	Higher than 120

Note: Blood pressure recordings should be based on more than two careful readings obtained on more than two occasions.

Risk Factors for High Blood Pressure

- **Overweight** – Losing as little as five pounds can positively influence blood pressure values.
- **Physically inactive** – Increasing your level of physical activity helps improve your level of physical fitness and decrease resting blood pressure. Not to mention, physical activity aids in weight management and weight loss efforts.
- **Poor nutritional habits** – A diet rich in lean protein, fruit, vegetables, low-fat dairy products, whole grains and healthy fats are important. Furthermore, meals low in excess sodium and added sugars are shown to help avoid high blood pressure, too.
- **Excess alcohol and nicotine use** – Limit alcohol consumption to no more than the gender-based recommended limits. If you use nicotine, reach out for professional help and support with quitting. Both habits contribute to high blood pressure.
- **Chronic high stress** – The earlier you can identify sources of stress and learn how to manage them effectively, the fewer negative coping behaviors you engage in such as: overeating, excess alcohol consumption, nicotine use, sleep deprivation, etc.

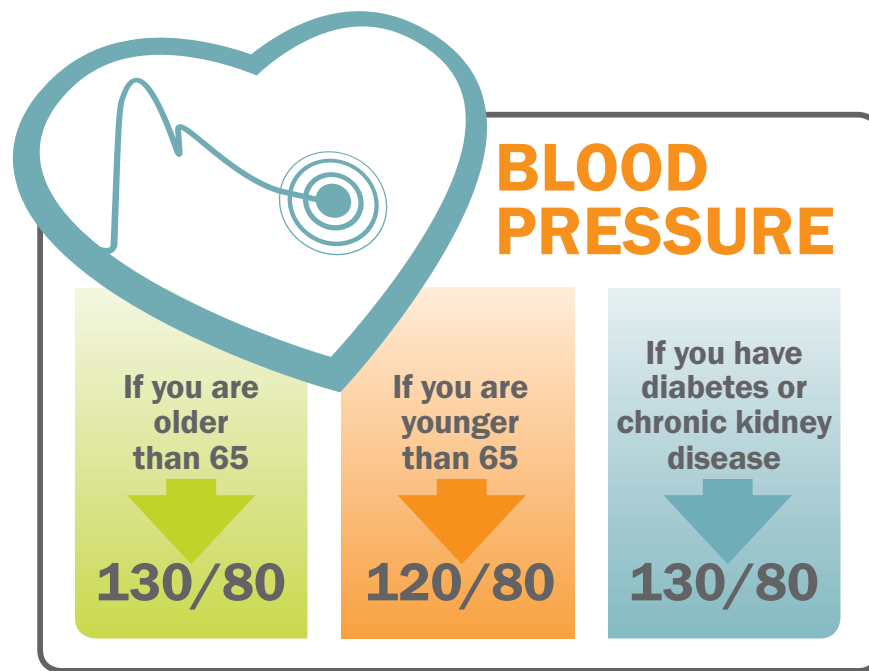
What should I do if I have high blood pressure?

1. Make an appointment to discuss options with your personal doctor to achieve a healthy blood pressure level for you.
2. If your initial blood pressure reading at the doctor's office is higher than usual, ask for a re-check before leaving your appointment.
3. Sometimes the doctor will recommend medication. If you choose that route, ask about associated side effects, and make sure to take the medication as prescribed. Don't miss dosages or stop taking the medication without a doctor's consent.

Lifestyle Suggestions to Help Lower Blood Pressure

- Incorporate healthy nutrition habits into your daily lifestyle.
- Maintain a healthy weight or design a personalized weight loss plan that includes adequate physical activity.
- Limit alcohol consumption.
- Reach out for help with tobacco/nicotine cessation.
- Explore effective stress management techniques.
- Strive to achieve seven to nine hours of sleep per night.

My Blood Pressure Action Plan



Weight Reduction

Losing just a little weight can make big changes in blood pressure.

Current Weight _____ Goal Weight _____

Steps I will take to achieve my goal

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Physical Activity Accountability

All physical activities benefit heart health. I will maintain physical activity every day.

Steps I will take to achieve my physical activity goal.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Nutrition

Dietary habits that are rich in lean protein, fruit, vegetables, low-fat dairy products, whole grains and healthy fats, as well as minimal consumption of sodium and added sugar, reduce your risks of high blood pressure, high cholesterol, heart disease, heart attack, stroke, prediabetes and various cancers.

Here are three unhealthy foods that I will cut back on in my current diet to make my heart health a greater priority.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Stress Management

Establishing effective coping skills that incorporate personal interests and passions is vital to managing stress, which avoids negative lifestyle behaviors that can increase your heart health risks.

Here are some well-known and new, future stress relieving activities that will help me better cope during stressful times.

Well-Known Activities

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

New, Future Activities

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

HIGH CHOLESTEROL - WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Cholesterol is a waxy, fat-like substance produced by the liver and found in the bloodstream. The body requires adequate cholesterol levels to produce hormones, vitamin D and aid in digestion. However, having too much cholesterol in the blood may increase your heart disease risk. Cholesterol levels are easily assessed with a blood test (lipid panel or profile) that reports the following components.

- **Total Cholesterol** – This is a composite value that includes one’s HDL, LDL and a portion of triglycerides.
- **HDL Cholesterol** – This is the “happy, healthy, good” cholesterol, the protective actor against cardiovascular risks. It serves as the cleaning agent in the blood to return excess cholesterol to the liver. The higher the value the better.
- **LDL Cholesterol** – This is the “lousy, unhealthy, bad” cholesterol that can contribute to build-up in the arteries, which hardens and narrows the vessels resulting in restrictive blood flow. A low value indicates less heart disease risk.
- **Total/HDL Cholesterol Ratio** – This is a ratio that checks the balance of HDL within your total cholesterol. The goal is to maintain a low ratio.
- **Triglycerides** – This component of cholesterol is produced by the liver and used as an energy source. A lower value is ideal.

Sources:

<http://www.heart.org>

<http://hyper.ahajournals.org>

<https://sodiumbreakup.heart.org>

<https://www.cdc.gov/>



networkhealth.com